















**FREER GALLERY OF ART  
FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION**

**III. CERAMICS FROM  
THE WORLD OF ISLAM**

BY

ESIN ATIL



SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

WASHINGTON

1973

FREER GALLERY OF ART  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

COPYRIGHT © 1973 FREER GALLERY OF ART  
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NO.: 73-92017  
PRINTED IN THE U.S.A. BY GARAMOND/PRIDEMARK PRESS, BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

## FOREWORD

When Charles Lang Freer made his Deed of Gift of the Freer Gallery of Art to the Smithsonian Institution fifty years ago, he called upon those who would direct its future to promote the finest ideals of beauty as seen in the civilizations of the East. At that time, the art of the Orient was but slightly known or understood by the West. In the United States the Near East evoked thoughts primarily of pyramids and the biblical world. The magnificence of the cultures of Iran, Turkey, Egypt, and the other nations of the Near East and the miracle of the coming of Muhammed and the great religion he founded, Islam, were neither understood nor accepted by our scholars. Through the years, however, our eyes have opened and wonderful vistas of great beauty have been revealed.

Playing an important role in the research and preservation of objects from Iran and the entire Near Eastern world was the Freer Gallery of Art. The research and publication programs which were envisaged by Charles Lang Freer have proceeded smoothly as our scholars have sought to learn more about human creativity and the spark of divine genius which has made the human complex and superior to lesser creatures. At the same time, our fragility should make us feel humble. The human perishes, but the objects he has created often remain as testaments to him.

This third special exhibition commemorating the Jubilee Year is devoted to Ceramics from the World of Islam. It is miraculous that these delicate objects composed of the earth from which life springs have survived. Over eighty-five percent of the pieces in the exhibition derive from Iran, that land of great rugged beauty and strength which, over two thousand five hundred years ago, gave our world a code of human rights. The dignity of man is reflected in the utensils, vessels, and decorative objects he made and used. Though all ceramics from the Near East are to be treasured, it was in the Islamic period that potters truly mastered their material and elegance and beautiful decoration of great variety appeared. The history of the development of those ceramics and the stories they tell are related in this catalogue written by Dr. Esin Atil, our very able Curator of Near Eastern Art. All of our staff assisted in making such an exhibition and catalogue possible. The effort of these, however, would have been in vain were it not for a grant of funds to be used for the preparation of this catalogue given by the Hagop Kevorkian Fund.

With this volume we do homage to the bond of friendship that has always joined our institution with those in Iran. We salute the potters, who worked the clay and left us a rich heritage of ceramic treasures from the World of Islam. Each object in this volume stands as an ambassador of peace and good will.

Freer Gallery of Art  
December, 1973

HAROLD P. STERN  
*Director*





## PREFACE

Ceramics from the world of Islam was chosen as the theme for the exhibition of Near Eastern art for several reasons. Islamic art is perhaps best represented outside the Muslim lands by its ceramic objects which are found in all private and public collections devoted to the Near East. Devoid of any religious or dogmatic iconography, these objects reveal the secularism of Islamic civilization. They express the taste of the people and are thus distinguished from the other secular arts, most of which, like manuscript illustrations and gold or silverwork, were created basically for the members of the court. In spite of dynastic upheavals Islamic pottery was extensively produced throughout the Muslim lands whose artisans continuously created unique and spectacular examples with incredible vitality.

The term "Islamic" is quite ambiguous: it is applied to define both the religion established by the Prophet Muhammed as well as the complex and multi-faceted culture of the lands where the majority of the population profess the Muslim faith. When used to identify that culture, the term "Islamic" becomes even more incongruous since those lands extend from Asia through parts of Africa and Europe, and include a mixture of ethnic groups and traditions with many theological and political variations. Yet these segments are united by a distinctive "Islamic" character which differentiates them from non-Islamic entities. Some of the most outstanding features of this remarkable civilization can be observed in its ceramic tradition.

Any study on Near Eastern pottery is undoubtedly indebted to the works of Arthur Lane, the foremost pioneer in this field. Our knowledge of Islamic pottery is continually advancing with the aid of new methods of scientific analyses, excavation reports and scholarly research. However, there are still wide gaps in our understanding of the technical problems, stylistic developments and iconography of many types of wares. There is also a lack of publications with detailed illustrations and descriptions of the Islamic pottery collections in major museums. The main concern of this catalogue is to present a number of pieces which have not been previously published or studied and to provide a complete physical description of each object with the hope that such information may assist future studies.

The references to specific publications and comparable pieces are included in the descriptive analysis of the individual objects. The materials constituting the paste, glazes and pigments of the pieces are intentionally omitted since they have not as yet been scientifically determined. The two appendices included at the end of the catalogue show the results

which were obtained from a suggested classification of the colors of paste and of inscriptions, based on the pieces in the exhibition.

At the request of the Freer Gallery of Art, Dr. Stuart J. Fleming of the Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art in Oxford, England, conducted thermoluminescence testings on sixty-three of the objects in the catalogue. Unfortunately, due to the lack of time, not every piece in the exhibition could be sampled and tested.

This method measures the time elapsed since a piece of pottery was last fired and determines its approximate age. The data obtained is open to further research for it is possible that an ancient object was refired at a later period. The results of thermoluminescence testing are extremely useful in making decisions regarding the authenticity and approximate date of each piece.

The asterisks following the catalogue numbers indicate those objects which have been analysed; the dates given in the catalogue fall within the range provided by the tests.

The Arabic inscriptions in the catalogue were written by Kamal Boullata who also deciphered some of the problematic passages and clarified their meaning.

In the preparation of the exhibition and the catalogue I am grateful for the assistance of the Freer staff: to our photographers Raymond Schwartz, Ursula Pariser and James Hayden for providing excellent plates; to our museum specialist Martin Amt whose expertise was invaluable in the setting up of the exhibition; to my secretary Rosalina Boucher who cheerfully retyped the seemingly endless additions and revisions; to my colleagues Hin-cheung Lovell and Josephine Knapp who had many useful suggestions on the related problems of Islamic and Chinese ceramics: and above all to Thomas W. Chase and John Winter of our Technical Laboratory who not only spent the past months on the restoration and cleaning of the objects but with great patience taught me how to study Islamic pottery through scientific methods and to evaluate the data obtained from technical analyses.

Freer Gallery of Art  
December, 1973

ESIN ATIL  
*Associate Curator of  
Near Eastern Art*

## INTRODUCTION

The production of ceramics, possibly man's oldest and most permanent contribution to civilization, began in the neolithic age, immediately after agricultural settlements were established, and it survived without interruption to the present day. The importance of ceramics in providing the necessary data for the reconstruction of the past is especially significant in the Near East where shards and wasters, dating as far back as the seventh and sixth millennia B.C., enable archaeologists to determine the chronological sequence of its ancient civilizations.

The act of producing a shape from a lump of clay, its creative and metamorphical process, has always intrigued the Near Eastern mind. This fascination is reflected in the religious texts of the Near East, particularly in the Biblical and Koranic passages pertaining to the physical substance of man. In the Old Testament there are several references in which the vessel formed by the potter is likened to the creation of man by God, both creators having absolute control over the shape and destiny of their products:

O Lord, thou art our father, we are the clay and thou our potter; we are all the work of thy hand (Isaiah, 64:8).

O, house of Israel, cannot I do with you as the potter? saith the Lord. Behold as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in mine hand (Jeremiah, 18:6).

The allegorical relation between God and potter, and man and clay also exists in the Koran:

And certainly We created man of clay that gives forth sound, of black mud fashioned in shape (15:26).

I am creating a mortal out of potter's clay (15:28).

He created man of clay like the potter's (55:14).

Similar themes can be found in Islamic literature, the most famous of which are the verses of Omar Khayyam, written in the twelfth century. In the *Rubaiyyat* the pot acquires an inquisitive soul, not unlike that of man:

Listen again. One evening at the close  
Of Ramazan, ere the better moon arose  
In that old potter's shop I stood alone  
With the clay population round in rows.

And strange to tell, among that earthen lot  
Some could articulate, while others not  
And suddenly one more patient cried:  
"Who *is* the Potter, pray, and who the Pot?"

The involvement with the articulation of clay and the inventiveness of the potter underwent a sudden and remarkable transformation during the formative years of Islamic art. Parthian and Sasanian ceramics executed prior to Islam were often utilitarian and of little artistic merit. Following the expansion of Islam from Central Asia to Spain within a hundred years after the teachings of Muhammed, a substantial middle class evolved in the newly established urban centers, and ceramics began to be created for popular consumption, reflecting the tastes of the rich merchants and bourgeoisie. By the ninth century the humble wares of the potter had become works of art, produced to satisfy the desire of the urban dweller to possess objects imitating the themes and materials exclusive to the court.

This transformation in early Islamic ceramic production appeared in two specific regions: around the capital of the Abbasid caliphate in Iraq and in the northeastern provinces of Khorasan and Transoxiana.

#### *Abbasid Wares* (Nos. 1-4)

The most original technique invented by the Islamic potter is that of luster in which the prosaic earthenware was made to resemble a sumptuous gold object. The attempt to imitate the gold utensils used by the court is exemplified by the few early pieces which not only copy the shapes but also the techniques of metalwork (No. 2). In time, the surface decoration expanded to include stylized human and animal figures (Nos. 3 and 4).

The origin of luster-painted wares, executed both in Iraq and Egypt in the ninth century, is a controversial topic. Iraq is favored by some scholars since it was the seat of the caliphate and the source of other innovations, while Egypt is upheld by others who point to the existence of luster-painted glass made there in the eighth century. It is more likely that this new technique originated around Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasids. A vast number of examples were excavated by Ernst Herzfeld and Friedrich Sarre in the palaces of Samarra which were occupied by the court between 836 and 863.<sup>1</sup>

Abbasid lusterware was exported to all corners of the Islamic world with samples found in India, Iran, Egypt and Spain.<sup>2</sup> The luster-painting technique was also extensively employed in Egypt during the reign of the Tulunids (868-905), as indicated by the finds of Fustat;<sup>3</sup> it also

<sup>1</sup> F. Sarre, *Die Keramik von Samarra*, Berlin, 1925.

<sup>2</sup> For the fragments discovered in Susa see R. Koehlin, *Les Céramiques Musulmanes de Suse au Musée du Louvre*, Paris, 1928; and M. Rosen-Ayalon, "Islamic Pottery from Susa," *Archaeology*, vol. XXIV, no. 3 (June, 1971), pp. 204-208.

<sup>3</sup> G. T. Scanlon, "The Fustat Mounds," *Archaeology*, pp. 220-233; and R. Schnyder, "Tulunidische Lüsterfayence," *Ars Orientalis*, vol. V (1963), pp. 49-78.



appears in Tunisia, on the tiles of the Great Mosque at Kairouan which is dated 862.

The characteristics of Abbasid lusterware consist of a cream paste, covered by an opaque white glaze. The design, overglaze-painted in either polychrome or monochrome luster, was fixed during a second and reduced firing. The decorative features reveal highly stylized human or animal figures enclosed by wide contour panels with circles, dots and strokes filling the background.

A second type of Abbasid ware reveals an awareness of Chinese traditions, which will be of great significance throughout the history of Islamic pottery. Both the Samarra and the Fustat excavations have yielded a wealth of Chinese ceramics, proving the indisputable popularity of Far Eastern wares in the Islamic world. Imitations of three-color glazed T'ang pottery were found not only in Iraq and Egypt, but also in Iran. This type, which unfortunately is not represented in the exhibition, shows splashes of green, yellow and purple glazes, often enhanced by incised decorations.

The pure white Chinese ware was rarely copied during the Abbasid period. Islamic potters preferred to paint geometric or floral motifs on the opaque white surfaces, using blue or a combination of blue, green and other colors (No. 1). The employment of cobalt-blue is often referred to as one of the greatest innovations of the world of Islam and one which influenced Chinese ceramics.

In the ninth and tenth centuries, a unique concept of Islamic ornamentation, popularly called the "arabesque," made its initial appearance on ceramics. This feature will be used indiscriminately on all future works of art ranging from textiles, woodwork, metalwork, ceramics and manuscript illuminations to architectural decoration. Totally covering the surfaces without a logical beginning or end, it combines geometric shapes, floral and vegetal motifs, at times even human and animal figures, and creates a sense of infinite growth through the flow and interaction of its parts. The arabesque is never a specific form but a combination of interrelated elements; some of which can be quite naturalistic while others are highly abstract.<sup>4</sup>

#### *Samanid Wares* (Nos. 5-12)

A completely different aesthetic approach to the art of ceramics can be found on a group of wares executed in Khorasan and Transoxiana during the Samanid rule (819-1005). The buff paste of this group was covered by a white engobe on which earth-colored slips (brown, black

<sup>4</sup> For the definition of arabesque as an "idea" with possible theological and mystical implications see O. Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, New Haven, 1973, pp. 188-205.

and red) were used for elegant inscriptions which not only convey messages but also decorate the objects. Thus, employing calligraphy, possibly the greatest artistic contribution of Islam, the potters were able to create objects of great beauty and significance. The messages (primarily good wishes, popular sayings and proverbs) reflect the mentality of the society in which virtuous behavior was stressed (Nos. 7, 8, 11 and 12). Writing, whether legible or merely symbolic, is one of the major components of Islamic pottery decoration and one which will continue to be used on ceramics for several centuries.

Another type of ware made in this period was decorated with stylized human and animal figures, surrounded by vegetal motifs. The reddish-buff paste of these pieces was covered by a white engobe on which the decoration was underglaze painted in polychrome colors. Some of the themes reflect princely activities and the coarseness of their execution suggests a provincial style (No. 6).

Samanid pottery also included examples of splash-glazed and incised pieces, which were also found both in Iraq and Egypt, as well as imitations of Abbasid lusterwares. Although the style of the luster imitations follow the conventions established in Iraq, they reveal a different technique in which a greenish pigment was employed under a transparent glaze (No. 5).

Excavations from Samarkand and Nishapur indicate that the slip-painted epigraphic pottery, as well as splash-glazed wares and luster imitations were commonly executed in both sites. The polychrome-painted wares appear to have been indigenous to Nishapur. A group of Samarkand shards and wasters in Berlin has been published<sup>5</sup> and the finds of Nishapur, housed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, will soon be in print.<sup>6</sup> There also exist studies on the epigraphic analyses of Samanid pottery as well as a suggested chronology of Samarkand wares.<sup>7</sup>

The invention of luster-painting, the formation of the arabesque and the employment of calligraphy as an iconographic and ornamental device

<sup>5</sup> K. Erdmann, "Afrasiab Ceramic Wares," *Bulletin of the Iranian Institute*, vol. VI, nos. 1-4 (Dec., 1946), pp. 102-110.

<sup>6</sup> For publications on the Nishapur excavations see the articles by C. K. Wilkinson in the *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, vol. XXXII, no. 10 (Oct., 1937); vol. XXXIII, no. 11 (Nov., 1938); vol. XXXVII, no. 3 (March, 1942); n.s. vol. VI, no. 3 (Nov., 1947); vol. IX, no. 2 (Oct., 1950); vol. XVII, no. 9 (May, 1959); vol. XX, no. 3 (Nov., 1961); and "Christian Remains from Nishapur," in *Forschungen zur Kunst Asiens*, Istanbul, 1965, pp. 79-87.

<sup>7</sup> L. Volov (Golombek), "Plaited Kufic on Samanid Epigraphic Pottery," *Ars Orientalis*, vol. VI (1966), pp. 107-133; Sh. Tashhadjaev, *Kbudjestvennaia Keramika Samarkanda*, Tashkent, 1967; G. Pugachenkova, *Iz Istoria Iskusstva Velikogo Goroda: K 2500-Metiiu Samarkanda*, Tashkent, 1972; and articles by O. Bolshakov in *Epigrafika Vostoka*, nos. 12-18, 1958-67.

are the most significant contributions of early Islamic pottery. The appearance of human figures and animals on the ceramics of this period established a vocabulary of princely themes and bestiary which predominated the Seljuk period.

*Seljuk Wares* (Nos. 13-56)

Following the arrival of the Seljuk Turks from Central Asia, the ceramic production of Iran accelerated with an unprecedented energy, creating an endless variety of shapes, styles and techniques. Although the rule of the Seljuks (1038-1194) disintegrated in time, Iran continued to be governed by the Turkish amirs who were related to this family. The term "Seljuk" is, therefore, loosely applied to define the period from the mid-eleventh to the first quarter of the thirteenth century at which time a new onslaught, the Mongols, arrived from the East and brought total destruction to the established urban centers.

Since many of the cities settled by the Seljuks have never been properly excavated, the information we possess on the provenance of a great number of pieces and the evolution of most types is highly speculative. Our knowledge is often based on stylistic affiliations and projected chronological developments as pieces inscribed with dates and place of manufacture are extremely rare. However, the stylistic features of Kashan have been identified<sup>8</sup> and the publication of a group of wasters found in that city helps to determine some of the wares.<sup>9</sup> The Rayy finds, although not published, are accessible in the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia and provide important documentation as to the types of ceramics executed at that site. Yet there is little concrete data on the production of such regions as Azerbaijan, Fars, Khuzistan and Kirman, as well as on the kilns of Sava and Gurgan, although a unique group of intact pieces was discovered at the latter city.<sup>10</sup>

Early Seljuk pottery is quite varied and seems to have been produced in diverse centers. One particular group reflects a renewal of interest in Chinese porcelains, this time the models being the splendid white wares of the Sung dynasty. The Seljuk examples possess an extremely fine, hard and white paste; they were carved or molded and at times pierced with the transparent glaze filling the holes, thus producing an artificial trans-

<sup>8</sup> R. Ettinghausen, "Evidence for the Identification of Kashan Pottery," *Ars Islamica*, vol. III (1936), pp. 44-75.

<sup>9</sup> A. U. Pope, "New Findings in Persian Ceramics of the Islamic Period," *Bulletin of the American Institute for Iranian Art and Archaeology*, vol. V, no. 2 (Dec., 1937), pp. 161-166.

<sup>10</sup> These were packed in large jars to avoid the Mongol destruction of 1220. For the wares attributed to this city see M. Bahrami, *Gurgan Faiences*, Cairo, 1949.

lucency (Nos. 13-15). Similar techniques were also applied to the pieces glazed in monochrome colors (Nos. 16 and 24).

Carved or incised motifs also appear on polychrome-glazed wares. In one type, called *lakabi*, the background of the design was carved, leaving the outlines in relief; the designated areas were then filled with colored glazes (No. 17). A different group of wares, executed in the sgraffiato technique, is attributed to Aghkand in northwestern Iran. This group has a reddish paste covered with a white engobe; the decoration was incised into the engobe with the colored glazes applied within the sunken outlines (Nos. 18 and 19). By employing these techniques, the potters attempted to prevent the glazes from running into the adjacent areas. Carved or incised wares often represent single animals.

A series of Seljuk pieces shows raised decorations; some of these were carved or cast from molds, at times enhanced with stamped motifs, while others used thickly applied slips to create motifs in low relief (Nos. 20-22 and 25).

The most spectacular examples of Seljuk pottery of Iran were executed during the last quarter of the twelfth and the early decades of the thirteenth century. A revival of luster painting can be seen in a superb group of wares whose decoration generally reflects the themes taken from the princely cycle—enthroned personages, conversing couples, riders, hunters and musicians intermingled with real and fantastic animals—set against a minutely detailed background and often incorporating bands of inscriptions (Nos. 27-34). The finest luster-painted objects are attributed to Kashan, based on signed and dated tiles and pottery known to have been made there. The wares of Rayy are often associated with a more casual execution, confirmed by the finds from that site, and the pieces assigned to Gurgan generally reveal a dependence on the Kashan style. Since luster-painted ceramics reveal variations in style and quality, they must have been produced in a number of Seljuk cities.

Similar designs combining human figures, animals, arabesques and inscriptions appear on the overglaze-painted wares, which are commonly termed *minai*. The themes on these pieces are often comparable to the subjects painted by the miniaturists and several examples directly relate to the stories illustrated in books (No. 44). The provenance of *minai* wares is still undetermined although a few fragments were unearthed in Rayy. The technique is rather laborious: some of the pigments were applied under the transparent glaze while others were fixed during a second firing. Thus, the potters were able to use a wide range of colors and represent intricate compositions (Nos. 35-51).

In the late Seljuk period, underglaze-painted pieces were also widely produced. These wares were painted in blue or black under a clear or turquoise glaze and their themes follow the decorative vocabulary of the period (Nos. 52-56).



The fifty-year span, roughly between 1175 and 1225, was the greatest period of Iranian ceramic production during which an astonishing quantity and variety of wares were created. The potters were not only limited to the techniques described above but often used a combination of carved, molded, pierced, gilded, underglaze and overglaze-painted motifs, displaying a remarkable range both in technical virtuosity and in decorative repertoire (for two spectacular objects see Nos. 23 and 48). Coexisting with the outstanding examples described in the catalogue are a vast number of simple and utilitarian pieces, some of which are monochrome glazed while others are unglazed but decorated with molded, stamped and pierced motifs. These pieces were obviously produced for daily household use.

#### *Fatimid and Ayyubid Wares (Nos. 57-67)*

The luster-painting technique, which appeared in Egypt in the ninth century, flourished under the Fatimids (909-1171).<sup>11</sup> Although Egyptian lusterwares preserved some of the Abbasid conventions (such as contour panels and circles and dots filling the voids), their style of painting differs from both Iraqi and Iranian examples, following a local tradition (Nos. 57 and 58).<sup>12</sup> Luster-painted pottery was extensively produced in the eleventh and twelfth centuries as judged from the vast finds at Fustat.

During this period sgraffiato wares using polychrome glazes were also executed in Egypt and Syria, recalling the contemporary Iranian pieces (No. 62). A majority of these wares are attributed to Rakka which was also active in the ensuing reign of the Ayyubids (1171-1250). A group of Ayyubid ceramics is underglazed-painted in blue and turquoise with overglaze brownish-red luster motifs. Although most of these examples are prosaic household vessels, several manage to achieve a high artistic level, harmoniously combining arabesques with inscriptions (Nos. 63-67).

#### *Ilkhanid Wares (Nos. 68-77)*

The destruction of major pottery centers such as Nishapur, Rakka, Rayy and Gurgan by the Mongols resulted in a temporary halt in the production of ceramics in the Near East. It was revived to some extent by the Ilkhanids (1256-1353), a branch of the Mongols who settled in

<sup>11</sup> For studies on Fatimid lusterware see two articles by M. Jenkins, "The Palmette Tree: A Study in the Iconography of Egyptian Lustre Painted Pottery," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*, vol. VII (1968), pp. 119-126; and "Muslim: An Early Fatimid Ceramist," *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, vol. XXVI, no. 9 (May, 1968), pp. 359-369.

<sup>12</sup> R. Ettinghausen, "Painting in the Fatimid Period: A Reconstruction," *Ars Islamica*, vol. IX (1942), pp. 112-124.



Iran and converted to Islam. While some of the earlier traditions survived, several new styles and techniques appeared in the second half of the thirteenth century. It is assumed that the Kashan kilns were once again activated and Sultanabad became the center for the manufacture of a particular group of wares.<sup>13</sup>

A treatise written by Abu'l Kasim in 1301 is invaluable for the understanding of the materials used in the pastes and glazes of the Ilkhanid period. This document also explains the techniques of different types of pottery.<sup>14</sup>

During the Ilkhanid reign luster-painting reappeared both on tiles and pottery, generally following the early thirteenth-century features (Nos. 68, 69, 73 and 74). Molded and monochrome-glazed wares as well as underglaze-painted pieces also continued to be produced although their aesthetics reflect the Mongol taste (Nos. 71, 72 and 77). Overglaze-painted wares reveal a change of style in which repetitive spirals, scrolls and dots were painted in black, white and red on blue or turquoise grounds. Termed *lajvardina*, these pieces were often enhanced by the application of gold leaf (Nos. 75 and 76).

An innovation of this period is seen in the slip-painted and rather boldly executed bowls. Called the Sultanabad ware, this type was covered with a gray engobe on which the design was applied with a thick white slip and outlined in black (No. 70). This group, executed in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, often depicts such Chinese themes as lotus blossoms and phoenix brought in by the Mongols, and offers a refreshing change from the other derivative styles.

#### *Spanish Wares* (No. 78)

The great luster-painting tradition of Spain, conquered by the Arabs in the middle of the eighth century, is represented by a singular example in the exhibition. Lusterware was originally imported to Spain from Iraq as indicated by the fragments discovered in the palace of Madinah al-Zahra, built in 937. It was extensively produced under the rule of the Nasrids of Granada (1236-1492) and the ceramics of Valencia and Malaga became internationally famous during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>15</sup>

One of the unique shapes created in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries was a huge wing-handled vase, over six feet in

<sup>13</sup> G. Reitlinger, "Sultanabad," *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramics Society*, vol. XX (1944-45), pp. 25-34.

<sup>14</sup> For the English translation and commentary see J. W. Allan, "Abu'l Qasim's Treatise on Ceramics," *Iran*, vol. XI (1973), pp. 111-120.

<sup>15</sup> A. W. Frothingham, *Lustrewares of Spain*, New York, 1951; and R. Ettinghausen, "Notes on the Lusterwares of Spain," *Ars Orientalis*, vol. I (1954), pp. 133-156.

height. This spectacular form, attributed to Malaga, is called the "Alhambra vase" after one example which is still preserved in the Alhambra Palace at Granada.

*Ottoman Wares* (Nos. 79-88)

In Anatolia, which was conquered by the Seljuks in the second half of the eleventh century, the early ceramic tradition generally followed those of Iran and Syria. Seljuks of Anatolia produced sgraffiato and underglaze-painted pottery as well as luster and *minai* tiles which were found on the walls of the imperial palaces around Konya.

During the Ottoman rule (1281-1923), a great quantity of underglaze-painted pottery was executed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The renowned blue-and-white wares of the Ottomans appeared around the last decades of the fifteenth century, inspired by Yüan and Ming porcelains of China collected by the Turkish sultans in the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul.<sup>16</sup> This group, characterized by its fine white paste, refined drawing and bright transparent glaze, either reflects Chinese themes (No. 80) or relies on the motifs created by the imperial design studio (No. 79).

A local tradition showing a preference for floral motifs began to predominate in the second quarter of the sixteenth century, and turquoise, green and purple were added to the color scheme (Nos. 81 and 82). By the 1550's the classical Ottoman style was firmly established with the incorporation of a thickly applied red. Polychrome-painted tiles and pottery from this period display a wealth of identifiable flora (such as tulips, roses and hyacinths), combined with elegantly twisting leaves, blossoming branches and trees. This type of ware represents one of the most outstanding achievements of Islamic pottery (Nos. 84-88).

Iznik is the only Ottoman site which has been thoroughly excavated and its findings published.<sup>17</sup> The excavation reports show that all types of Ottoman wares were executed in the kilns of this city. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Ottomans produced a remarkable amount of high quality pottery and tiles which were also exported to Europe and the Near East.<sup>18</sup> Istanbul and Kütahya also manufactured ceramics and it is likely that Bursa and Edirne had their own local kilns.

<sup>16</sup> J. A. Pope, *Fourteenth-Century Blue-and-White: A Group of Chinese Porcelains in the Topkapu Sarayı Müzesi, Istanbul*, Wash., D.C., 1951; and "Chinese Influences on Iznik Pottery: A Re-examination of an Old Problem," in *Islamic Art in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, N.Y., 1972, pp. 125-139.

<sup>17</sup> O. Aslanapa, *Türkische Fliesen und Keramik in Anatolien*, Istanbul, 1965; and "Pottery and Kilns from the Iznik Excavations," in *Forschungen zur Kunst Asiens*, pp. 140-146.

<sup>18</sup> A. Lane, "The Ottoman Pottery of Iznik," *Ars Orientalis*, vol. II (1957), pp. 241-282; E. Atil, *Turkish Art of the Ottoman Period*, Wash., D.C., 1973, pp. 21-27.

*Safavid and Later Wares* (Nos. 89-101)

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the blue-and-white Chinese tradition, which influenced early Ottoman pottery, also had a strong impact on the ceramic activities of Egypt and Syria as well as of Iran.<sup>19</sup>

During the Safavid period (1502-1722) a great quantity of blue-and-white, turquoise-and-black and polychrome-painted wares were produced (No. 89). A number of these pieces, dating from the beginning of the sixteenth to the middle of the seventeenth century, were found in the town of Kubachi in northern Iran, although it is doubtful whether they were exclusively produced at that site.

The Safavid shahs, like the Ottoman sultans, were avid collectors of Far Eastern porcelains.<sup>20</sup> Their admiration of Chinese ceramics is reflected in the sixteenth and seventeenth-century Iranian imitations of celadon and blue-and-white wares, the latter of which was thought to have been produced in Kirman and Meshhed (Nos. 90, 91, 93 and 94). Kirman was also renowned for its polychrome-painted pottery which is not represented in the exhibition.

Imitations of Chinese porcelains can also be observed in the incised and pierced white wares which appeared during the late Safavid period (Nos. 95-97). The paste of this group is almost as vitrified and translucent as those of Far Eastern porcelains, recalling the twelfth-century copies of the Sung pieces.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there occurred a revival of luster-painting on a group of wares whose provenance is still undetermined. Although the technique dates to the beginning of Islamic art, the motifs used in this period reflect the contemporary Safavid idiom with a predominance of floral elements (Nos. 98-100).

The last example of underglaze-painted wares in the exhibition was executed in Iran during the Kajar rule (1779-1924). It represents this dynasty's preoccupation with the revival of the older traditions, particularly the great princely themes of the past (No. 101).

Ceramics from the world of Islam, which spanned the vast region from Inner Asia to the Atlantic Ocean, reveal an extraordinary range of styles and techniques which endured foreign invasions and the rise or fall of dynasties. The foundations of this virtually uninterrupted tradition, excelling in objects of great aesthetic and technical achievement for over ten centuries, can be traced back to its formative years. The basic charac-

<sup>19</sup> For the best study of this period see G. Reitlinger, "The Interim Period in Persian Pottery: An Essay in Chronological Revision," *Ars Islamica*, vol. V (1938), pp. 155-178.

<sup>20</sup> The collection, started by Shah Abbas in 1611 at Ardabil, is now in the Archaeological Museum in Tehran. J. A. Pope, *Chinese Porcelains from the Ardebil Shrine*, Wash., D.C., 1956.

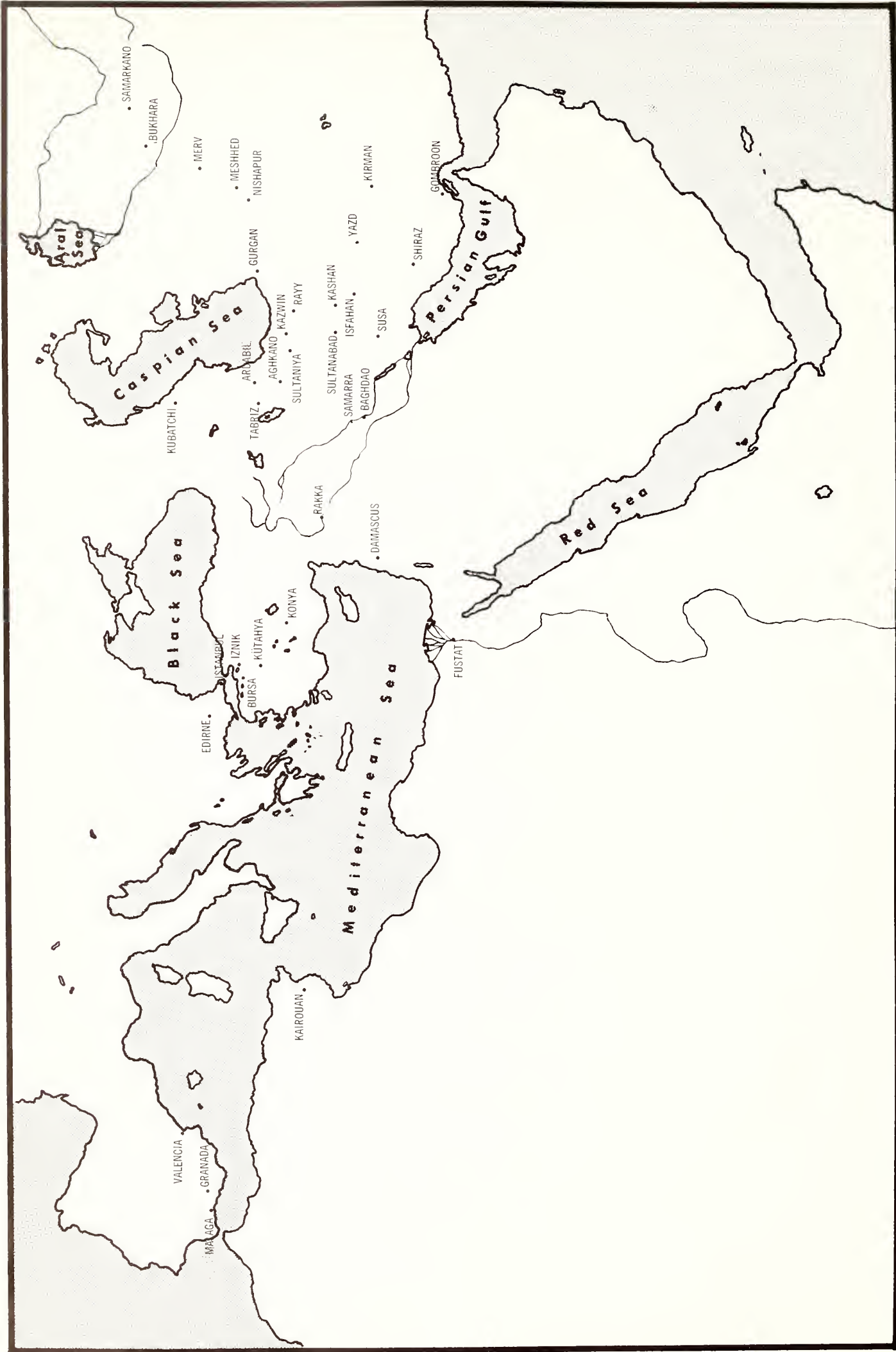
ter of Islamic pottery was determined in the ninth century even though modified by subsequent stylistic, technical and regional developments.

The impact of China and the recognition of its monumental ceramic tradition was always present with attempts to copy T'ang, Sung, Yüan, Ming and even later Chinese wares. Yet within a short time the shapes, techniques and motifs inspired by Far Eastern porcelains were adapted to the taste of the Muslims who seemed to have been dissatisfied with the purity and the consistent vocabulary of Chinese ceramics.

The most striking feature of Islamic pottery is the preoccupation with surface decoration which is independent of shape—a concept so alien to Chinese art. This predominance of surface ornamentation, arbitrarily employed regardless of function or form, whether on the facade of a mosque or on the frontispiece of a manuscript, is characteristic of Islamic art and one which is best portrayed in its ceramic tradition.

Produced for the middle classes, the ceramics of Islam reflect the luxury surrounding the courts and at times contain mystical references whose significance is often lost to us. They were created for the average person who delighted in owning an object of beauty, embellished with the pleasures of heroes and kings and with the symbols of good life.







# CATALOGUE



- 1\* *Bowl with flaring sides, everted rim and low foot* 66.11  
Paste: cream  
Glaze: opaque white  
Decoration: overglaze painted in blue  
Height: 6.0 cm. (2 3/8 in.); diameter: 20.5 cm. (8 1/8 in.)  
Iraq, Abbasid period, 9th century

The inside of the bowl is decorated with a symmetrical design composed of stylized leaves surrounding a diamond-shaped motif which encloses a three-petaled floral element. Some of the motifs are solidly painted in blue whereas the others are filled with hatched lines. The exterior of the bowl is unadorned.

Cobalt-blue painted white wares appeared in the ninth century and are one of the characteristic types of pottery found in Samarra. The paste of these wares is a fine-grained cream-colored clay, identical to that of the luster ceramics from the same site. An opaque white glaze covered the surfaces on which the decoration was painted in plain blue or green, or in a combination of blue, green, purple and, at times, yellow. The decoration consists of floral and geometric motifs, irregular splashes and inscriptions. A majority of these pieces is bowls, similar in shape to this example. Although this type of ware reflects Chinese influences in its shape and in the use of a white glaze, the decorative repertoire, incorporating arabesques and inscriptions, is of Islamic origin.

Similar pieces have been excavated in Iran (in Susa, Rayy and Nishapur) as well as in Syria and Egypt, indicating the wide appeal of this style. It is suggested that they were imported from Iraq, made by itinerant potters or imitated by the local artists. The examples produced in Nishapur reveal that cobalt-blue was not used but substituted by an underglaze purplish-black pigment.

The inscriptions on some of the examples give the names of the makers. A blue-and-white ninth or tenth-century bowl from Iraq states that it was "among those things made by Abu'l Baki" (L. Katz, *Asian Art from the Collections of Ernest Erickson*, Brooklyn Museum, New York, 1963, no. 7). A tenth-century piece found in Rayy is painted in green on white, and bears the inscription "made by Abu'l Abd (?)" (Brooklyn Museum, L 63.9.31). Another contemporary piece is signed "made by Salih" (A. Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery*, London, 1965, pl. 9A).

\* Indicates objects which have been tested for thermoluminescence.





- 2\* *Shallow plate with straight rim and flat base* 57.23  
Paste: cream  
Glaze: golden luster  
Decoration: molded with overglaze green splashes  
Height: 2.8 cm. (1 1/8 in.); diameter: 28.0 cm. (11 in.)  
Iraq, Abbasid period, 9th century

The decoration of the plate consists of three narrow bands on the rim which enclose a symmetrical composition made of interlacing bands and four palmettes centered around a four-petaled rosette. The bands and the palmettes are filled with small bosses and hatched lines. The piece was executed from a mold which left the outlines of the motifs, the bosses and hatched lines in low relief. Both the interior and the plain exterior are entirely covered with golden luster which is partially deteriorated. The interior shows eight irregular splashes of green which appear on the four palmettes and in the loops of the bands between them.

Glazed pottery with molded decoration was common in late Roman times and continued to be executed in the early Abbasid period. However, the elements in this example are of Near Eastern origin, combining geometric forms with palmettes which are reminiscent of Sasanian motifs. Similar molded pieces, incorporating floral and geometric elements, have been excavated in Samarra and Susa. The Freer piece is said to have been found at the latter site.

The shapes and techniques of these early lusterwares derived from metalwork. This plate, which imitates gold repoussé work, is one of the finest and largest in the group and is often published to exemplify the early molded lusterwares (Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery*, pl. 15B; and A. U. Pope, *A Survey of Persian Art*, London, 1964-65, vol. X, pl. 567A).







3\* *Large bowl with flaring sides, everted rim and low foot* 25.6

Paste: cream

Glaze: opaque white

Decoration: overglaze painted in golden luster

Height: 9.9 cm. (3 7/8 in.); diameter: 35.9 cm. (14 1/8 in.)

Iraq, Abbasid period, 10th century

A seated man playing a lute appears in the center of the bowl. He is bearded and wears a peaked cap; his hair is shoulder length with the ends flipped up while two curling locks fall on his cheeks. The figure is represented frontally, sitting cross-legged. On the upper left there is a long and narrow stem terminating in a split-leaf. Opposite, on the upper right, is a cartouche with an inscription. The rim of the bowl is adorned with a scalloped border. This border as well as the figure, the leaf and the inscription are enclosed by contour panels while the remaining areas are filled with dots, forming a uniform backdrop for the main motifs.

The exterior has six concentric circles, also enclosed by contour panels. The insides of the circles and the areas between them are filled with irregular dots and strokes. On the base, there is a second inscription which reads *برسكة*, or "blessing."

The inscription on the inside of the bowl has the words *توكل و*, that is, "trust (in God) and." The complete phrase could be interpreted as meaning "have trust in God and he will be sufficient for you" which is from the Koran and appears on contemporary pottery found in Samarra (Sarre, p. 86). The reason for the omission of the second part of the phrase on the Freer bowl could be that it was a well-known saying and the meaning was immediately understood by the beholder.

The luster on the bowl has disintegrated and presently only a yellow stain remains.

The convention of using scalloped bands on the rim, dotted backgrounds, contour panels, circles with dots and dashes on the exterior of the pieces as well as the stylized rendering of the figures are characteristic features of ninth and tenth-century monochrome lusterwares attributed to Iraq. Popularly called "Samarra-type," this group of pottery was found in all parts of the Islamic world, with examples unearthed as far west as Madinah al-Zahra in Spain and as far east as Brahminabad in Sind. It has been suggested that they were either exported from Iraq or made by travelling potters. The Samarra luster style was also imitated in Iran (see No. 5).

There exist an almost identical bowl representing a lutist as well as two fragmentary pieces (Pope, *Survey*, pl. 579A; M. Pézard, *La Céramique Archaique de l'Islam*, Paris, 1920, pls. CXV and CXVI). The same subject appears on the reverse of two medals struck by the caliphs of Baghdad, al-Muktadir (908-932) and al-Muti (946-974) (T. Arnold, *Painting in Islam*, New York, 1965, pl. LIX). Cross-legged musicians playing lutes were also employed on the wall paintings of Samarra (E. Herzfeld, *Die Malereien von Samarra*, Berlin, 1927, p. 28, fig. 13).





- 4\*** *Tall jar with shallow neck, everted mouth and flat base* 53.90  
Paste: cream  
Glaze: opaque white  
Decoration: overglaze painted in brownish-gold luster  
Height: 28.2 cm. (11 1/8 in.); width: 23.2 cm. (9 1/8 in.)  
Iraq, Abbasid period, 10th century

The shallow neck of this unusually shaped jar is decorated with strokes and circles on the outside while a series of scallops adorns the inner portion. The shoulder has a band composed of circles with dots, the "peacock's-eye" motif commonly seen on Abbasid wares. This band is intercepted by four narrow strips which extend to the body of the jar, dividing it into four vertical panels. These strips enclose stylized trees, composed of leaves and palmettes. On the shoulder, corresponding to the center of each panel, there are four lugs executed in relief.

The decoration in the vertical panels of the body consists of two repetitive scenes: a human figure alternates with two superimposed birds. The personages in both panels are attired in a long robe, which is tied at the waist with a pearl sash, and bear a conical headdress whose long train flows down to the ground. Pearl necklaces appear on their necks and they also seem to wear earrings. The figures are represented frontally, their heads inclined at almost a right angle to their bodies and facing out. With both hands they hold a chain, braid or rope which seems to hang from their foreheads. The identification of the robed personages and their activities have not yet been resolved although it has been suggested that they are priests holding rosaries (G. Féhérvári, "Two Early Abbasid Luster Bowls and the Influence of Central Asia," *Oriental Art*, vol. IX, no. 1 [Spring, 1963], p. 84, fig. 12).

In the other two panels, each of the birds holds a leaf in its beak with a large flaring ribbon attached to its head. A split-leaf rests on their backs. The birds wear pearl necklaces, similar to those seen on the robed figures.

Although this jar is said to have come from Iran like many of the other lusterwares from this period, it belongs to the same group as the previous example which is thought to have been produced in Iraq.





- 5\* *Deep bowl with flaring sides, straight rim and low foot* 66.27  
Paste: reddish-buff  
Glaze: transparent  
Decoration: underglaze painted in olive-green on white engobe  
Height: 7.6 cm. (3 in.); diameter: 18.5 cm. (7 1/4 in.)  
Iran, Samanid period, 10th-11th century

The early lusterwares of the Abbasid period were often imitated in Iran as seen in this bowl which represents a peacock holding a large fish in its beak. The decoration uses the conventions of the Samarra style with a scalloped band on the rim, wide contour panels around the motifs and dots and circles filling in the background. The theme of a bird holding a fish in its beak had been observed on a prehistorical bowl found in Samarra and reappears in the tenth century on post-Samarra lusters with several examples depicted on bowls and jugs. Other related themes from Iraq show animals or birds with leaves in their mouths (see No. 4).

This Iranian example differs from the Iraqi wares both technically and stylistically. The technique used here is not true luster: the motifs are underglaze painted in an olive-green pigment or slip on the white engobe which covers the inner surface of the bowl, thus simulating the greenish-yellow Samarra lusters. The design reveals a derivative quality in which the silhouette effect is dissolved (this feature is particularly noticeable in the body and tail of the peacock); the circles of the background omit the central dot of the "peacock's-eye" motif.

The exterior shows a series of diagonal lines on the rim, deviating from the traditional concentric circles found on the Abbasid wares. The lower part of the exterior walls and the foot are unglazed.

The provenance of this piece is not known but several examples of underglaze-painted wares which follow the stylistic features of the Samarra style were found both in Nishapur and in Samarkand (C. K. Wilkinson, "The Glazed Pottery of Nishapur and Samarkand," *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, vol. XX, no. 3 [Nov., 1961], pp. 102-115). Some of the pieces from northeastern Iran imitate luster by using a green slip which tends to stain the transparent glaze yellow (C. K. Wilkinson, *Iranian Ceramics*, New York, 1963, pl. 27). One similar bowl from Iran, which also represents a peacock holding a fish in its beak, is a slip-painted in black under a greenish glaze (Victoria and Albert Museum, *Islamic Pottery: 800-1400 A.D.*, London, 1969, no. 40).







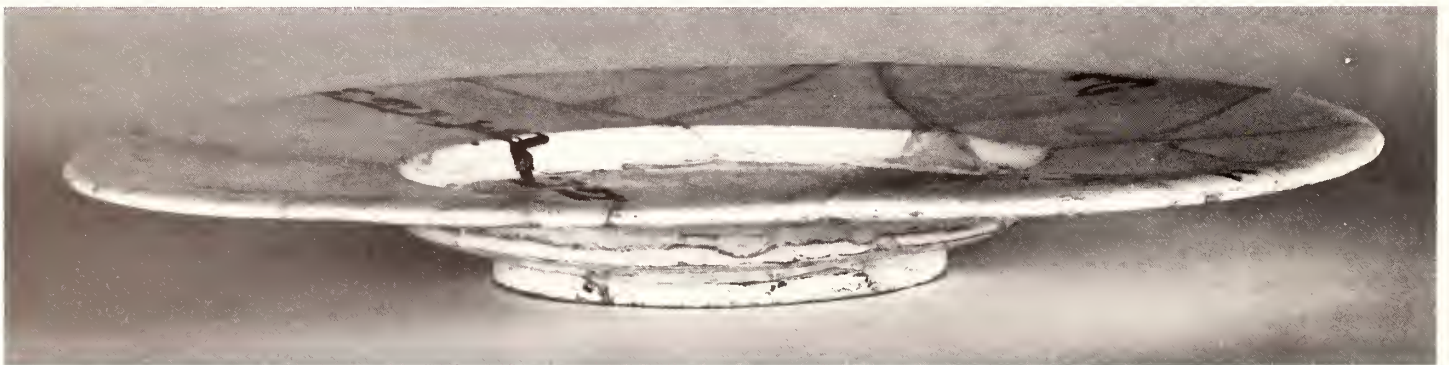
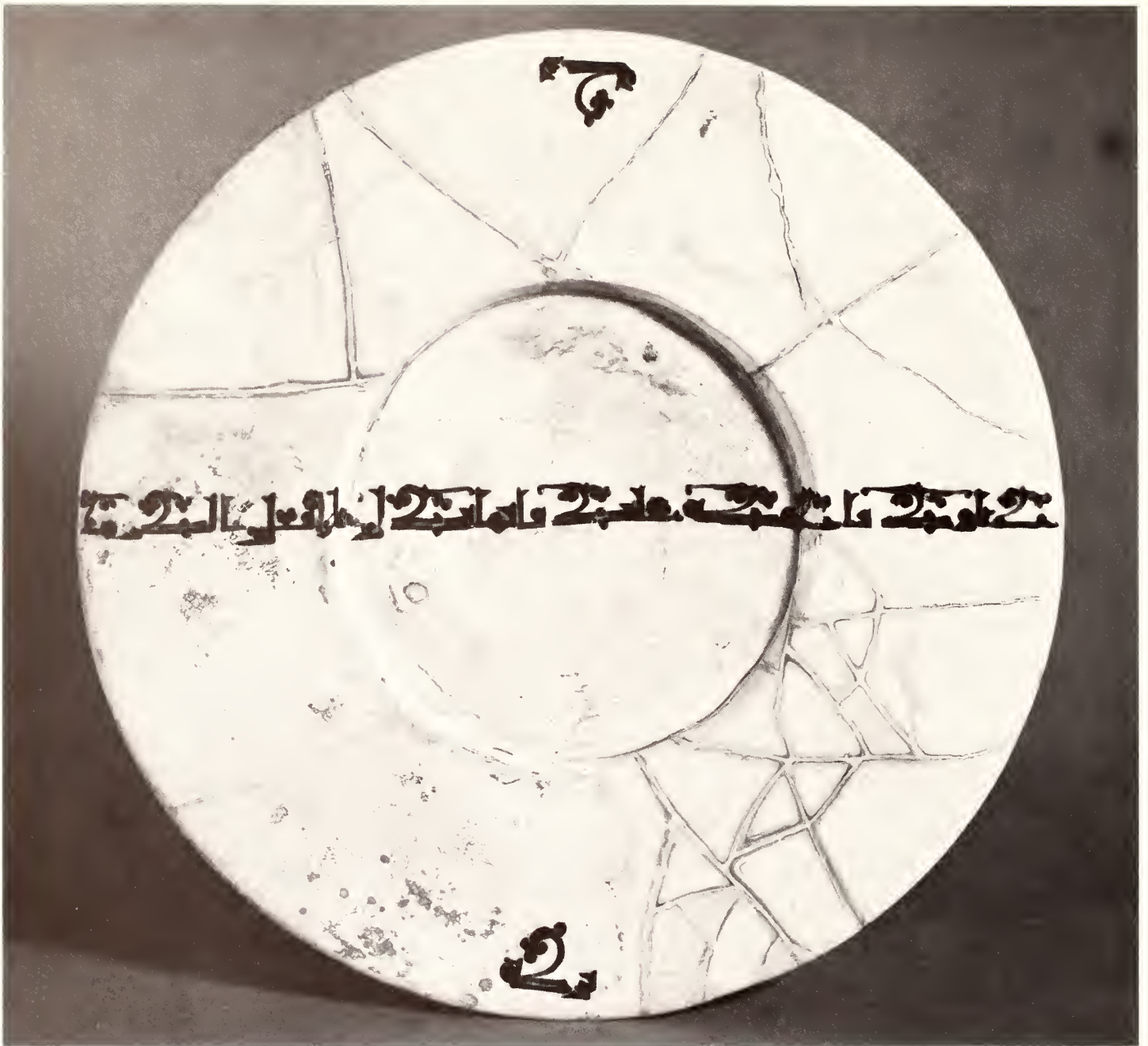
- 6\* *Deep bowl with flaring sides, straight rim and low foot* 59.16  
Paste: reddish-buff  
Glaze: transparent  
Decoration: underglaze painted in black, yellow and green  
Height: 10.6 cm. (4 1/8 in.); diameter: 26.9 cm. (10 9/16 in.)  
Iran, Samanid period, 9th-10th century

The inside of the bowl shows a central tree flanked by two figures seated on stools while additional branches appear behind the figures; two birds with leaves in their beaks are suspended above their heads. The figures hold the branches from both the central tree and those behind them. A floral arabesque band adorns the inner rim. The exterior shows triangles alternating with concentric oval units.

Some of the pigments have run during the firing distorting the design. This feature is particularly noticeable on the lower portion of the left figure.

The theme of two figures flanking a stylized central tree recalls the motif employed in Sasanian and early Islamic textiles as well as the traditional investiture scenes (R. Ettinghausen, "A Case of Traditionalism in Iranian Art," in *Forschungen zur Kunst Asiens*, pp. 88-110, fig. 21).

This bowl exemplifies the polychrome-painted wares which were executed in Nishapur during the ninth and tenth centuries. While other types of pottery excavated in this city were also found in Samarkand, this particular group represents a local style produced only in Nishapur. The polychrome-painted wares are characterized by crowded compositions, stylized representations of animal and human figures and excessive use of yellow in their color scheme.



7\* *Large plate with wide flattened rim and low foot* 54.16

Paste: buff

Glaze: transparent

Decoration: underglaze painted in brown and red slips on white engobe

Height: 5.0 cm. (2 in.); diameter: 42.7 cm. (16 7/8 in.)

Iran, Samanid period, 10th century

An elegant floriated *kufic* inscription running horizontally across the entire inner surface, with a complete disregard of the shape, is the sole decoration of this plate. The inscription is in Arabic, written in dark-brown slip with only three letters painted in red. The message reads:

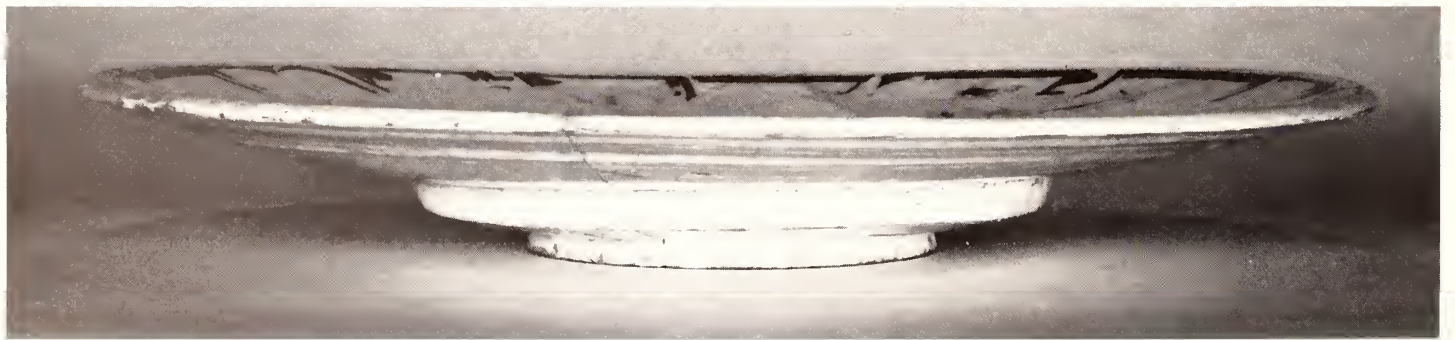
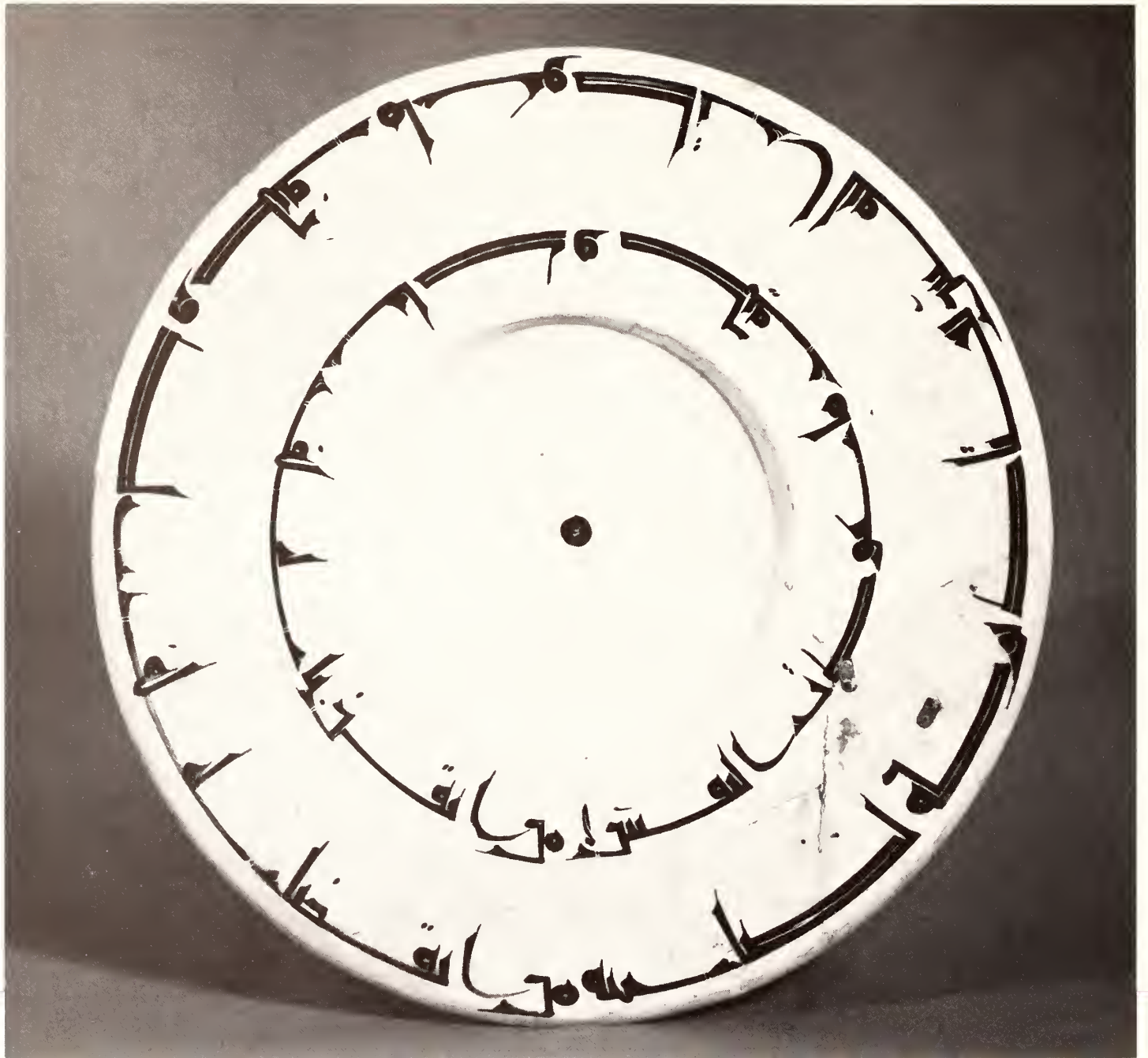
حياؤك فاحفظه عليك فإنما يدك على فعلي الكرم

Although the literal translation is, “Your modesty keep to yourself; behold, my actions prove my generosity,” this phrase is often rendered as, “Preserve for yourself your modesty for only modest points out the action of a noble man” (L. Volov [Golombek], p. 133, fig. 8).

The word *بركة*, or “blessing,” appears twice on the rim, in dark-brown, balancing the stark but most effective decorative composition of the piece.

This plate belongs to a group of slip-painted epigraphic pottery found in Khorasan and Transoxiana, executed in Nishapur and Samarkand, as well as in Bukhara and Merv during the Samanid period. These wares reveal a completely different technique and standard of aesthetics from the contemporary pottery manufactured in Iraq and Iran. A majority of the pieces has a creamy-white engobe entirely covering the buff body; the elegant inscriptions are written in brown and red slips. These inscriptions are always in Arabic, the literary language of the period, and employ proverbs or popular sayings.





- 8\* *Large plate with wide flattened rim and low foot* 52.11  
Paste: buff  
Glaze: transparent  
Decoration: underglaze painted in brown slip on white engobe  
Height: 6.0 cm. (2 3/8 in.); diameter: 46.8 cm. (18 1/16 in.)  
Iran, Samanid period, 10th century

Although the shape of this plate is identical to that of the previous (No. 7), it employs a different scheme of decoration with the inscription placed in two concentric bands on the wide rim. A small dot appears in the center of the object. This central motif is often interpreted as the symbol for *yin-yang* found in Chinese iconography, representing the opposing forces in nature.

Like other examples of this group, the buff body is covered with a white engobe on which an almost black, dark-brown slip is used for the inscription. The Arabic inscription, beginning on the outer band and continuing on the inner, reads:

من أيقن بالحلف جاد وكيف ما عودت النفس تعتاد  
بركة لصاحبه

The literal translation of this phrase is:

He who professes the faith (or takes the oath) will  
excell; and to whatever you accustom yourself you will  
grow accustomed to. Blessing to the owner.

The plate has been broken and repaired in ancient times as indicated by three bronze rivets which were used during its restoration.





9\* *Bowl with flaring sides, straight rim and low foot* 56.1

Paste: buff

Glaze: transparent

Decoration: underglaze painted in brown slip on white engobe

Height: 6.6 cm. (2 5/8 in.); diameter: 21.8 cm. (8 9/16 in.)

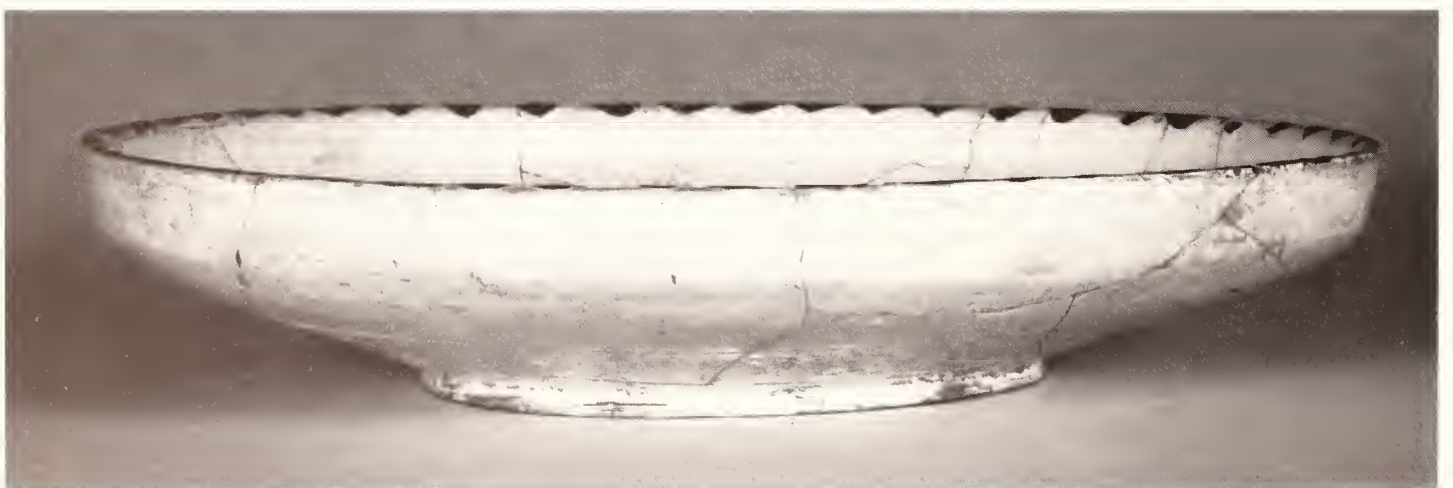
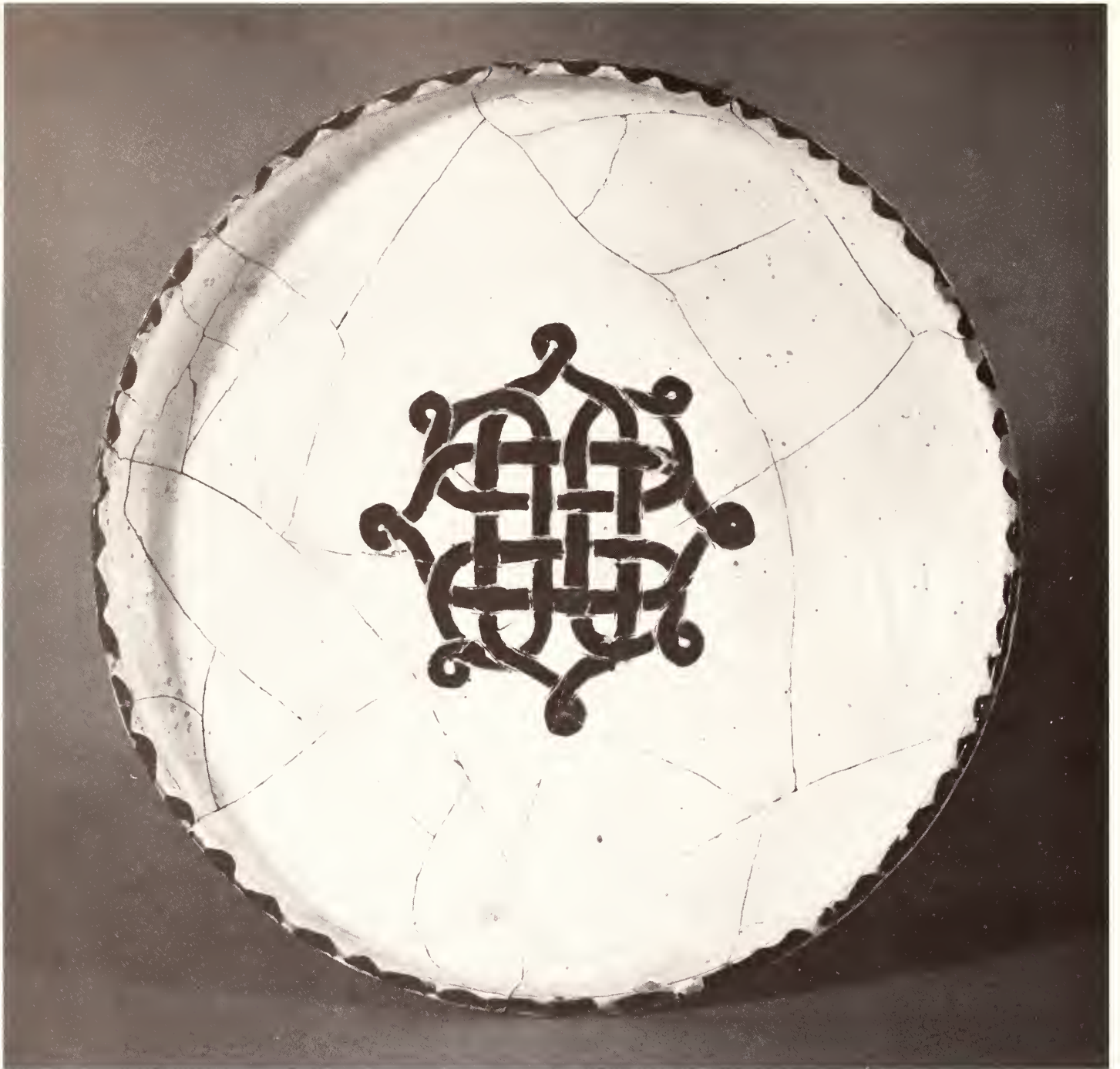
Iran, Samanid period, 10th century

The bowl represents two confronting long-tailed birds with a thin band adorning the edge. The word *برسقة*, or “blessing,” is repeated on the body of each bird.

There exist over a dozen pieces decorated with a pair of inscribed birds. The unusual frequency of this theme indicates that it was one of the most popular designs in Khorasan and Transoxiana in the ninth and tenth centuries.

During pre-Islamic times birds were considered auspicious. In the *Avesta* the bird is the symbol of glory and good fortune which can fly from the body of one person into another. The significance of the birds on this bowl is reinforced by the addition of the word “blessing.” Both the birds and the inscriptions carry the same meaning, represented symbolically and verbally. Since the bold calligraphic execution of the birds is similar to that of the inscriptions, the written message is almost hidden and has to be searched, thus increasing its mystical quality.





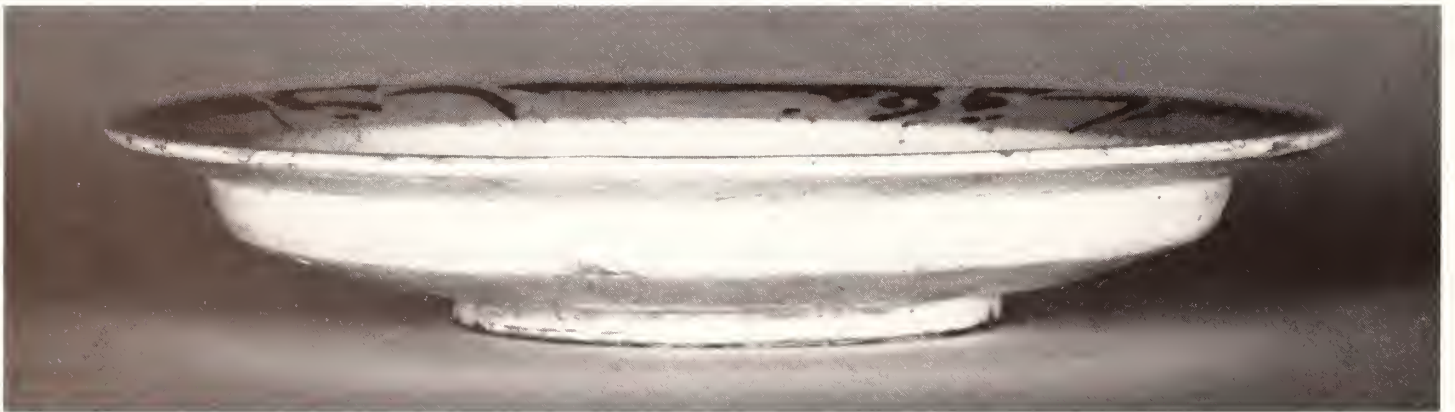
- 10\*** *Shallow bowl with flaring sides, straight rim and low foot* 53.70  
Paste: buff  
Glaze: transparent  
Decoration: underglaze painted in brown slip on white engobe  
Height: 6.7 cm. (2 5/8 in.); diameter: 32.4 cm. (12 3/4 in.)  
Iran, Samanid period, 10th century

The edge of the bowl is decorated with a scalloped band, reminiscent of the formula employed in luster or imitation luster wares from Iraq and Iran. In the center there is a geometric knot executed in a dark-brown slip with the paint incised at the points of intersection to clarify the overlapping and underpassing bands.

This example, like Numbers 7, 8 and 9, belongs to the type of pottery excavated in Nishapur and Samarkand, although exact parallels to the knotted motif have not yet been published. Incisions through the slip-painted areas are commonly employed on these wares, used to define the elements of design and to add details.

The intricately composed knot is one of the major components utilized in the surface decoration of Islamic architecture and portable objects such as manuscripts, textiles, metalwork and ceramics. Vertical letters of the inscriptions, and the undulating stems and branches of the arabesques often intersect and form knots, creating a profusion of inter-related flowing elements, suggesting infinite growth. The knot seen on this bowl is taken from a wider repertoire of decorative themes and is used independently, adhering to the rather puristic concept of design which prevailed in Samanid slip-painted pottery. It is possible that the perpetual and yet self-contained movement of the knot possesses a mystical symbolism.







**11\*** *Small plate with wide flattened rim and low foot* 65.27

Paste: buff

Glaze: transparent

Decoration: underglaze painted in brown and red slips on white engobe

Height: 3.6 cm. (1 7/16 in.); diameter: 21.0 cm. (8 1/4 in.)

Iran, Samanid period, 10th century

This small plate, similar in shape to Numbers 7 and 8, has an Arabic inscription written in a dark-brown slip on its wide rim. The center is decorated with a floral motif composed of four dark-brown curving stems revolving around a disc. Each stem terminates in a trilobed palmette which curves in, counteracted by a split-leaf which is reversed. Four irregular lozenge-shaped red units fill in the area between the palmettes and the leaves. Double red dots adorn the outer volutes of the central composition.

The *kufic* inscription reads:

الجود من أخلاق أهل الجنة

Excellence is a quality of the people of paradise.

This piece, said to have been found in Nishapur, is of the type commonly called Samarkand or Afrasiab ware.

The exact provenance of red and black slip-painted wares, decorated with Arabic inscriptions surrounding a revolving central motif, is far from solved. Both the Nishapur and Samarkand excavations have unearthed pieces which employ similar compositions. As also seen with the epigraphic wares, this style was produced throughout the urban centers of northeastern Iran, reflecting the taste of that society. The patrons were not only attracted to the aphorisms on the pieces but possibly also found symbolic or mystical meanings in the decorations.





12\* *Deep bowl with flaring sides, straight rim and low foot* 57-24

Paste: buff

Glaze: transparent

Decoration: underglaze painted in brown and red slips on white engobe

Height: 11.2 cm. (4 7/16 in.); diameter: 39.3 cm. (15 9/16 in.)

Iran, Samanid period, 10th century

The inner walls of this deep bowl possess a wide band of Arabic inscription written in dark-brown, enclosed by a border composed of alternating red and dark-brown scallops. The areas between the letters are filled with panels decorated with dark-brown dots, and red and brown four-petaled blossoms.

The central portion of the piece is adorned with an abstract tree which has five branches terminating in trilobed palmettes and split-leaves revolving around a central six-petaled rosette. This area is painted in reserve with the dark-brown slip forming the background of the tree. The central rosette and certain details on the branches are depicted in red. The branches revolve in a clockwise direction, in accordance with the reading of the inscription, and produce a movement which accentuates the circular shape of the bowl. The subtle placement of the trunk with one branch reversed, gently interrupts the revolving movement and ingeniously points out the beginning of the inscription which surrounds it.

The inscription is in two parts; the first portion begins after a small circle below the reversed branch of the tree and terminates with a floral motif; it is followed by a shorter phrase, placed on the bottom:

يقال قد خاطر من استغنى برأيه بركة لصاحبه  
بركة لصاحبه

It is said that he who is content with his own opinion runs into danger. Blessing to the owner.

The exterior is divided into eight vertical zones by dark-brown branches which enclose three-petaled floral motifs painted in red.

The Freer bowl is one of the largest and finest of the slip-painted wares executed in Khorasan and Transoxiana. With its exceptionally sophisticated understanding of decoration, the bowl exemplifies the highly refined aesthetic and technical perfection of Samanid pottery (O. Grabar, "Notes on the Decorative Composition of a Bowl from Northeastern Iran," in *Islamic Art in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, pp. 91-98, fig. 3).

The *kufic* inscription, written in the eastern Iranian style, is similar to those seen on Numbers 8 and 11, indicating that all three pieces are close in date. Since this bowl and the plate described in Number 11 both employ red in their color scheme and use a similar composition with an inscription surrounding a revolving central motif composed of branches, palmettes and split-leaves, they may have been executed in the same center.





- 13** *Jug with a single handle, shallow neck and low foot* 37.9  
 Paste: off-white  
 Glaze: transparent  
 Decoration: carved or molded  
 Height: 13.0 cm. (5 1/8 in.); diameter: 12.0 cm. (4 3/4 in.)  
 Iran, Seljuk period, 12th century

The single-handled jug is adorned with lotus petals on the lower portion of the body while a band of *kufic* inscriptions adorns the upper part. The shoulder is angular and the short neck reveals a series of vertical strokes. The Arabic inscription on the body reads:

العز والإقبال والدولة والسموات والبقاء لصاحب

Power and prosperity and dominion and eternity and  
 perpetuity to the owner.

The decoration on the neck, the inscription and the lotus petals on the body are in low relief, suggesting that the piece was either carved or cast from a mold.

This jug belongs to an exquisite group of white wares which made their appearance in the Islamic world following the arrival of the Seljuks. These wares have been found in Rayy and Gurgan, and are also attributed to the workshops of Kashan. Their paste is very hard and slightly grayish-white with the transparent glaze applied directly onto it. The objects are finely executed with thin, almost translucent walls. The term often used to describe the fabric is “soft-paste porcelain” which, although a misnomer, is helpful in that it differentiates the unusual hardness of the paste of this group from that of contemporary earthenwares.

Even though some of these white wares imitate Chinese porcelain, especially the Ting or *ch'ing-pai* wares of the Sung period, the shape of the Freer jug is purely Islamic, based on contemporary metalwork. The lotus panels at the lower portion of the body are reminiscent of Chinese motifs but the inscription band belongs to the world of Islam.





- 14\*** *Bowl with flaring sides, straight rim and low foot* 56.2  
Paste: off-white  
Glaze: transparent  
Decoration: carved and pierced  
Height: 6.2 cm. (2 7/16 in.); diameter: 18.4 cm. (7 1/4 in.)  
Iran, Seljuk period, 12th century

This bowl, whose shape is very close to that of white Sung wares, is decorated with two carved concentric bands: the outer is composed of a series of circles containing palmettes and the inner shows a scroll made up of the same motif. To produce an artificial translucency, the decoration is pierced with the transparent glaze filling the holes. The paste is identical to the previous example (No. 13), hard and fine with extremely thin walls.

Even though carved and pierced white wares have been found in various Seljuk centers, there is no concrete evidence as to their original provenance. The dating of these refined wares is also problematic; they appear in limited quantities and are generally attributed to the twelfth century. Bowls in similar shape and decoration, at times monochrome glazed in turquoise-blue or manganese-purple, were excavated in Rayy, Nishapur and Fustat. The Freer piece represents this unique and widespread, although short-lived, type of Seljuk pottery.



- 15** *Jug with single handle, shallow neck and low foot* 37.10  
Paste: off-white  
Glaze: transparent  
Decoration: carved and pierced  
Height: 10.0 cm. (3 15/16 in.); diameter: 8.3 cm. (3 5/16 in.)  
Iran, Seljuk period, 12th century

This small jug belongs to the same group as the previous two examples. Its body is adorned with four medallions filled with stylized floral motifs. The decoration is carved and pierced with the transparent glaze filling the holes. The style of decoration and the technique of execution are very close to the bowl described in Number 14.

The handle was broken off and is modern; portions of the neck and the mouth have also been recently restored.

There exists a number of identical small jugs, the shapes of which are very close to those found in metalwork: they all have pear-shaped bodies, straight shallow necks, plain or slightly splayed mouths and single handles with thumb-rests. (Pope, *Survey*, pls. 593A, C and D.) The decoration on the ceramic examples is in low relief, resembling the technique of chasing and engraving employed on metalwork. Yet, piercing the motifs and filling them with the glaze to produce an artificial translucency belongs to the tradition of pottery.

The hard white paste and the attempted translucency derive from Chinese prototypes. However, the technique and the decorative vocabulary are of Islamic origin.





- 16\*** *Large shallow bowl with flaring sides, flattened rim and low foot* 61.21  
Paste: off-white  
Glaze: dark-blue  
Decoration: carved  
Height: 8.6 cm. (3 3/8 in.); diameter: 40.8 cm. (16 in.)  
Iran, Seljuk period, 12th century

The center of the bowl represents a mounted warrior who wears a peaked cap and holds a sword in one hand while the other grasps the reins of his horse. The background is filled with a floral arabesque. Both the figure and the floral arabesque are executed in low relief. The cavetto is left unadorned and on the flattened rim there is a sketchily engraved scroll composed of twisting leaves. An overall dark-blue glaze covers the piece. The reverse is also glazed but unadorned.

Monochrome carved pottery appears about the same period as the white wares. This group usually employs dark-blue, turquoise, purple, yellow, green or brown glazes, and some of the examples are adorned with pierced motifs.

A number of the monochrome carved wares represents birds or animals set against a floral arabesque ground. The portrayal of human figures is rather rare in this type. The Freer plate reveals an awkward relation between the horse and rider, and a weakness in the depiction of the figure's torso which suggest that it was an experimental piece. The examples with figural compositions generally follow the decorative program seen on this bowl. They have a coarsely engraved rim, plain cavetto, and the main theme executed in low relief in the center.

A great number of monochrome carved wares was found in Nishapur, Samarkand, Rayy, Rakka and Fustat, indicating the wide appeal of this style.







**17\*** *Plate with flattened rim and low foot* 29.11

Paste: off-white

Glaze: green, dark-blue and purple

Decoration: carved

Height: 3.5 cm. (1 3/8 in.); diameter: 23.2 cm. (9 1/8 in.)

Iran, Seljuk period, mid-12th century

The center of the plate portrays a sphinx which has the head of a woman and the body of a four-legged animal whose tail terminates in a half-palmette. The diadem, foliated collar, forelegs and tail of the creature are painted green while the body is dark-blue, outlined in purple. Purple is also used to depict the facial features and the hair. The sphinx is enclosed by a blue band.

On the rim, there are four units composed of green and purple brackets flanking a central blue stroke. The exterior is undecorated.

Polychrome carved pottery, popularly called *lakabi*, developed from the monochrome carved wares yet it varies technically from the latter. In order to prevent the different colored glazes from running into one another, the motifs were carved out with outlines left in relief. The glazes were applied into the sunken areas, resembling the cloisonné technique used in enamels. This method was obviously most successful in flat wares, such as plates, which were fired face up, but the glazes still tended to run when the decoration was on a vertical surface.

The glazes employed on *lakabi* wares are green, blue, yellow and purple with the whitish paste covered by a slightly opacified glaze producing a creamy-white tone.

A majority of the polychrome carved wares represents single, real or fantastic animals, as seen on this plate. The heraldic portrayal of the sphinx is typical of this type of pottery. Two similar examples are in Japanese collections (*Persia Teikoku Kenkoku Nisen Gobyaku Nen Kinen: Persia Bijutsuten*, Tokyo, 1971, fig. 192; T. Mikami, *Islamic Pottery Mainly from Japanese Collections*, Tokyo, 1962-64, vol. II, pl. 122); and a third was published by Arthur Lane (*Early Islamic Pottery*, pl. 46A).

Due to technical reasons the thermoluminescence testing on this piece was inconclusive.





- 18\* *Bowl with flaring sides, flattened rim and low foot* 44-49  
Paste: reddish  
Glaze: green, yellow and purple  
Decoration: incised through white engobe  
Height: 9.8 cm. (3 7/8 in.); diameter: 27.6 cm. (10 7/8 in.)  
Iran, Seljuk period, 12th-13th century

A magnificent rooster fills the entire bowl; the body is depicted in left profile while the head turns back to face the opposite direction, thus creating an interesting tension. The background is covered with a floral arabesque and there is a medallion consisting of branches and leaves applied onto the body of the rooster. A pearl-band which intersects at four points surrounds the rooster. The rim is decorated with a series of roundels. The back of the bowl is rough and unglazed.

The decoration is executed in the sgraffiato technique. A white engobe covers the inner surface of the bowl and stops just below the exterior rim. The design was incised into the engobe and filled in with green, yellow and purple glazes. The incised lines prevented the colored glazes from running into the adjacent areas.

The most obvious prototype for the sgraffiato wares is metalwork. Many of the earlier examples use motifs which are almost identical to those seen on metal objects. Although the sgraffiato wares have been found in Anatolia, Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Iran, most of the pieces are said to come from Aghkand, near Tabriz, from which its popular name derives. Aghkand pottery, similar to the *lakabi* wares, is often decorated with single animals placed against a floral arabesque background.

This piece is a typical example of the sgraffiato technique which was extensively employed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Due to the dignified posture of the rooster, the Freer bowl has been used numerous times to illustrate incised polychrome pottery representing heraldic animals (Pope, *Survey*, pl. 607; R. Pinder-Wilson, *Islamic Art*, London, 1957, pl. 21).

Although the result obtained from the sample tested for thermoluminescence indicates a recent firing, it does not prove that the piece is of modern manufacture for there is evidence that the bowl has been *refired*. When the bowl was disassembled during its restoration at the Freer Gallery, it was observed that the glazes ran down into the edges of the fragments. It is strongly felt that the rooster bowl was executed in the Seljuk period and was discovered in a fragmentary condition. The fragments were refired in the early part of this century and, consequently, the bowl was put together. One small piece on the lower left portion was missing and is now restored.







- 19\* *Bowl with flaring sides, flattened rim and low foot* 67.4  
Paste: reddish  
Glaze: green and yellow  
Decoration: incised through white engobe  
Height: 8.2 cm. (3 1/4 in.); diameter: 25.1 cm. (9 7/8 in.)  
Iran, Seljuk period, 12th-13th century

Belonging to the same group as the previous example, this bowl represents a yellow hare amidst scrolling green foliage in the center. The animal appears to be running with its forelegs up in the air. The cavetto bears eight stylized blossoms while the rim is decorated with triangles.

The exterior is unglazed but partially covered with a white engobe on which there is a decorative inscription repeating the letters *alif-lam-ha*. Similar combination of letters is seen on the exteriors of several other bowls of this type.

An almost identical example is in the Louvre, Paris. It also depicts a hare in the center, enclosed by a cavetto of eight blossoms and the rim is adorned with triangles (Pope, *Survey*, pl. 608; and Orangerie des Tuileries, *Arts de l'Islam des Origines à 1700*, Paris, 1971, no. 33). The Louvre bowl is slightly smaller (24 cm.) and is signed by Abu Talip whose name appears on another piece of the same type of ware. This example probably served as the model for the Freer bowl (published in Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery*, pl. 34A).





**20\*** *Jug with single handle, shallow neck and low foot* 67.3  
Paste: off-white  
Glaze: transparent turquoise-blue  
Decoration: carved through black engobe  
Height: 14.0 cm. (5 1/2 in.); diameter: 14.6 cm. (5 3/4 in.)  
Iran, Seljuk period, late 12th century

The narrow straight neck of the jug is adorned with bold vertical strokes whereas the widening shoulder bears a scroll composed of seven large roundels which enclose palmettes. The lower half of the body has a series of lotus panels. Its shape, as well as the motifs on the neck and lower portion of the body, resemble the white-glazed jug described in Number 13.

This jug exemplifies a group of wares in which a black pigment was mixed with the engobe or slip. The mixture was either painted on with a brush or applied to the entire surface in which case the background of the design was carved out. The areas in relief, that is, those rendered in black, were worked over with a knife or sharp instrument to add the details. Finally, an overall transparent cream or turquoise-blue glaze covered the piece. There exists a series of black slip-painted and turquoise-glazed jugs, identical to the Freer example (Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery*, pl. 51C; *Islamic Pottery*, nos. 87, 88, 90 and 93).

Often called silhouette, shadow or black-slip ware, this group is generally dated around 1150-1200 and attributed to Rayy although the excavations at that site have not unearthed any comparable examples.



- 21** *Deep octagonal bowl with everted rim and high foot* 06.40  
Paste: off-white  
Glaze: turquoise  
Decoration: molded and stamped  
Height: 19.1 cm. (7 1/2 in.); diameter: 14.2 (5 5/8 in.)  
Iran, Seljuk period, late 12th-early 13th century

This octagonal bowl is decorated with panels which either represent an investiture scene or depict confronting sphinxes. The investiture scene, portraying two mounted figures facing each other and holding a wreath between them, is derived from a theme associated with Sasanian art. This scene is repeated on five consecutive panels of the bowl whereas the sphinxes are seen in the remaining three. A braid separates the panels and a frieze of running animals appears below each unit.

A two-part mold was used for the general shape of the bowl; then the panels were pressed onto the surface with clay or wooden stamps. These stamps were also employed on a number of other pieces, as indicated by the existence of several turquoise-glazed bowls which are decorated with the identical two scenes. However, in the other examples the panels are carefully alternated by using four of each scene on one piece (Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery*, pl. 42A; *Islamic Pottery*, no. 69; Pope, *Survey*, pl. 768B; and an unpublished bowl in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, no. 15.68). The impressions are considerably sharper in the other pieces, suggesting that perhaps the Freer bowl was the last in the series and the two stamps were beginning to wear down.

Unglazed molded or stamped pottery was extensively produced in earlier Islamic times and continued to coexist with the glazed wares throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Almost all the molded monochrome-glazed bowls were cast in two halves and the joints were camouflaged by the surface decoration, as seen in this example. Appliques, stamped or formed by hand, were added to the surfaces and at times repeated to achieve the desired decorative effect. The results were not always successful as the glaze settled in the recessed areas and often obliterated the sharpness of the design.





22\* *Deep octagonal bowl with everted rim and slightly splayed foot* 55.9

Paste: off-white

Glaze: creamy-white with blue streaks

Decoration: molded

Height: 11.7 cm. (4 5/8 in.); diameter: 15.2 cm. (6 in.)

Iran, Seljuk period, late 12th century

Signed by Hasan al-Kashani

Similar in shape and technique to the previous example, this deep bowl was also made in a two-piece mold. It is covered with a creamy-white glaze and has four vertical dark-blue streaks on the exterior and interior.

The main theme of decoration is an Arabic inscription which is placed against a floral arabesque ground. Below each panel is a scalloped border and just above the foot is a scroll composed of ten large palmettes. The character of this scroll with its palmettes executed in relief against a sunken ground resembles the one employed in the jug described earlier (No. 20).

The *nakshi* inscription spread to seven panels reads:

العزّ والاقبال والدولة

Power and prosperity and dominion.

The eighth panel contains a *kufic* inscription written in two lines:

عمل حسن القاشاني

The work of Hasan al-Kashani.

The mold made by Hasan al-Kashani was used for several other vessels. A white-glazed, blue-streaked and pierced bowl is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (no. 68.223.9); and another, which uses a dark-blue glaze, is owned by Ernest Erickson, presently on loan to the Brooklyn Museum (Katz, no. 28).

It is often assumed that Kashan originated this type of molded ware as suggested by the name of the artist. Numerous examples of molded and pierced white-glazed wares with blue streaks were among the finds of Rayy. The Nishapur excavations have not only yielded similar fragments but also the actual molds (C. K. Wilkinson, "The Kilns of Nishapur," *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, n. s., vol. XVII, no. 9 [May, 1959], pp. 235-240). One unique molded piece in the Hermitage Museum in Leningrad is decorated with several episodes from the story of *Khosrow and Shirin*. This remarkable example, possibly the earliest representation of Nizami's work, has been found in Khouz Khan in Turkestan (G. N. Balashova, "A Twelfth-Thirteenth Century Pottery Jug Decorated with Epic Subjects," in *Sredniaia Aziia i Iran*, Leningrad, 1972, pp. 91-106; English summary pp. 181-182).







23\* *Double-shell ewer shaped as a rooster* 49.19

Paste: off-white

Glaze: transparent turquoise

Decoration: underglaze painted in black and blue; outer shell reticulated

Height: 29.1 cm. (11 1/2 in.); width: 18.1 cm. (7 1/8 in.)

Iran, Seljuk period, early 13th century

The body of the ewer is in two shells with the outer shell composed of floral motifs and pierced. Two inscription bands, which contain verses from a Persian poem and have not yet been properly identified, encircle the lower portion of the body and the neck. The spout is in the form of a rooster's head and the handle is composed of the animal's tail.

The double-shell technique, the glaze and the motifs, particularly the sketchily executed willow-reeds in the zone above the foot, suggest that the piece belongs to the workshops of Kashan.

Double-shelled reticulated ewers and jugs are not uncommon among the vessels of the early thirteenth century. Zoomorphic vessels, often shaped as roosters, were also made. Some of these were pierced, as the Freer ewer, while others were constructed with single solid walls and painted in black under a transparent turquoise or blue glaze.

There exist two dated reticulated vessels which help to determine the age of this piece. An example, known as the "Macy" jug, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, is dated 1215 (Pope, *Survey*, pl. 738). An almost identical rooster-shaped vessel was formerly in the Ali Ibrahim Pasha collection in Cairo. The date of this ewer was rendered as 1167 by Gaston Wiet ("Une Aiguïère Persane du XIIème Siècle," *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte*, vol. XXIV, [1940-41], pp. 63-66) and revised to 1259 by Mehdi Bahrami (p. 59, note 3).

A number of undated reticulated rooster-shaped ewers has been published: one example was formerly in the Sambon collection in Paris (H. Rivière, *La Céramique dans l'Art Musulman*, Paris, 1913, vol. II, pl. 64), a second was exhibited in London (*Islamic Pottery*, no. 163); and the others are in the Louvre in Paris (*Arts de l'Islam*, no. 48), in Cairo (Bahrami, pl. XIX), in the Frank Brangwyn collection in London (Ettinghausen, "Evidence," fig. 32), in the Archaeological Museum in Tehran (Mikami, vol. I, pl. 178) and in a Japanese collection (*Ibid.*, vol. II, pl. 170).

All of these ewers have rooster-headed spouts and tail handles like the Freer example; the reticulated outer shells of some are decorated with arabesques whereas others incorporate human figures, harpies, fish and various animals. They were executed in the first half of the thirteenth century as suggested by the two dated examples.



- 24** *Shallow bowl with incurving rim and high splayed foot* 14.52  
 Paste: off-white  
 Glaze: turquoise-blue  
 Decoration: carved and pierced  
 Height: 8.3 cm. (3 5/16 in.); diameter: 18.7 cm. (7 3/8 in.)  
 Iran, Seljuk period, early 13th century

The decoration of the bowl consists of a band of *naskhi* inscription which is set against a floral arabesque background and encircles the walls. The letters are rendered in low relief and the background is pierced, giving an artificial translucency to the piece. The Arabic inscription reads:

وإقبال الزائد النصر الغالب العز الصاعد والفرّة  
 القاعدة والعز الدائم

And prosperity superabundant, victory triumphant,  
 power rising and abundance dwelling and power eternal.

Below this band is another phrase which is incised into the body:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

Due to its extremely elegant decoration and refined execution, this piece is an outstanding example of carved and monochrome glazed Seljuk wares (Pope, *Survey*, pl. 769B). Although the first inscription on the bowl, bestowing a series of good wishes, is one of the most frequently encountered messages in the late twelfth and early thirteenth-century Iranian ceramics, the pious wording of the second portion is quite exceptional. This phrase, called the *basmala*, is from the Koran and does not occur on other examples of Islamic pottery.

The concept of piercing monochrome-glazed pottery was first encountered in the twelfth century, as seen on the bowl and jug described in Numbers 14 and 15, as well as in the octagonal bowl given as reference in Number 22. This technique seems to have been employed throughout the Seljuk period and was at times used in combination with overglaze and underglaze-painted motifs, producing rich compositions with astounding technical skill (Nos. 23 and 48).





**25\*** *Large jar with high straight neck and flat base* 28.1

Paste: buff

Glaze: dark-blue

Decoration: molded; originally overglaze gilded and outlined in red

Height: 65.4 cm. (25 3/4 in.); diameter: 40.7 cm. (16 in.)

Iran, Seljuk period or later, 13th century

This oversize jar is decorated in five horizontal zones. The band around the neck represents seven seated musicians who play lutes, lyres, tambourines and flutes, and are separated by plant motifs. The narrow frieze on the shoulder consists of eight animals running counterclockwise, placed against an arabesque ground. The widest zone on the upper part of the body depicts a polo game with six riders, separated from each other by the identical plant motifs seen on the neck. The zone below it has a scene which is repeated twice: a cypress tree, rising above a pool which contains a large fish, is flanked by a fox and a man digging with a spade; a crane, peacock and griffin are added to the foliage between the two scenes. Finally, a scroll encompassing five large leaves appears above the base.

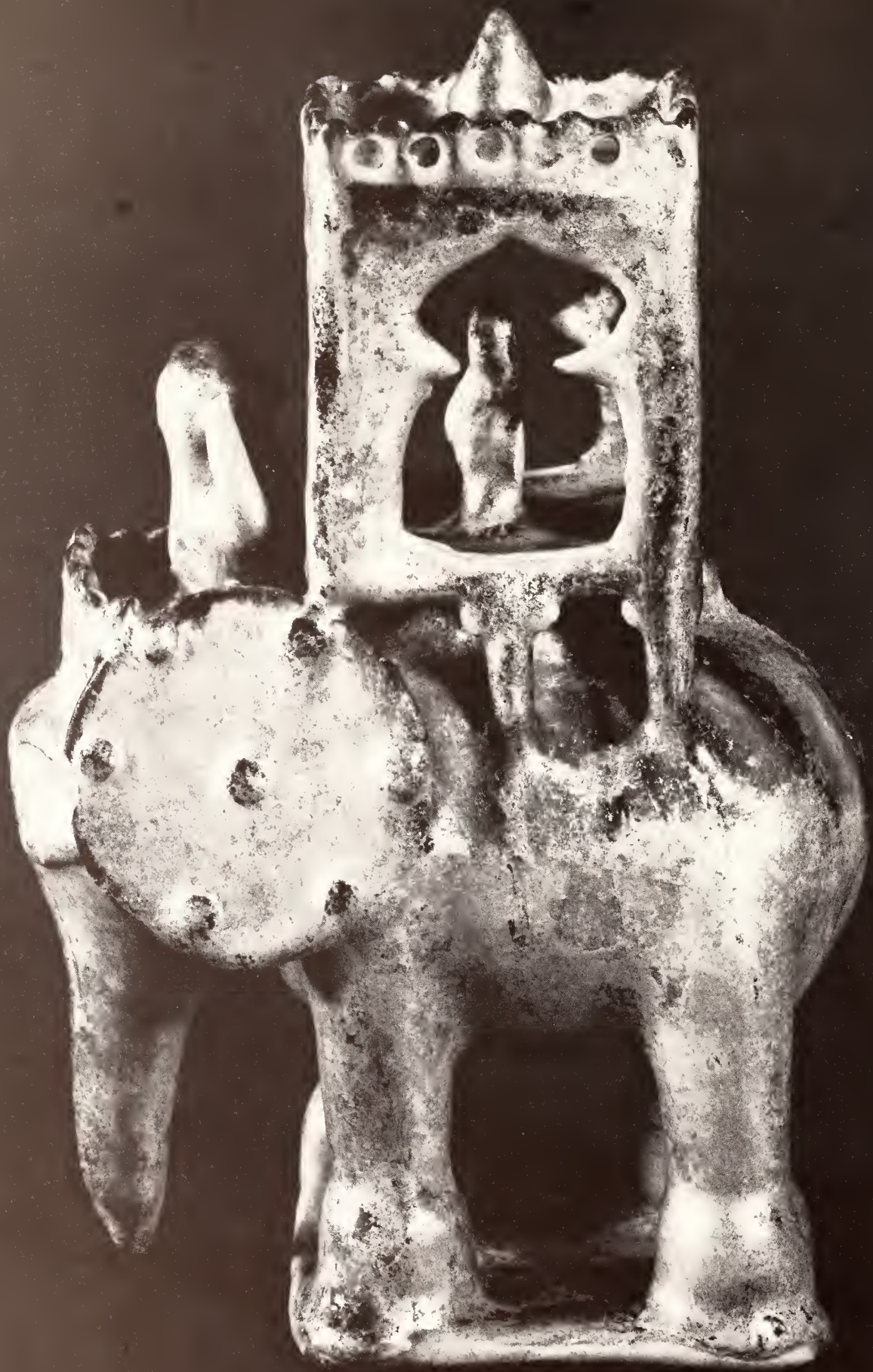
The jar is molded and covered with a dark-blue glaze. In its original state, the piece was entirely gilded and the motifs were outlined in red. Presently only few areas retain the gilding and the red pigment.

Bands containing musicians, running animals and polo players, and even the theme of a man digging with a spade, have counterparts in contemporary metalwork. These elements are also found in miniatures, revealing the common decorative vocabulary of the period.

There exist two other ceramic pieces which are comparable to the Freer jar. One of these is the celebrated Basilewski jar in the Hermitage Museum. Although it is painted in luster and is slightly larger (78 cm.), the neck and shoulder bands, as well as the frieze with the polo players, are very similar to those on our example. The second jar, formerly in the Rabenou collection, is now owned by the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (no. 44.829). It is molded and glazed in dark-blue, and is approximately the same height (69 cm.); with the exception of the lowest band, the remaining four zones duplicate those found on the Freer piece.

The Basilewski jar is identified with the workshops of Kashan. Both the Boston and Freer examples are also attributed to the same site due to their similarity to this jar (Pope, *Survey*, pls. 701, 761 and 762; and Ettinghausen, "Evidence," figs. 34 and 35).







## 26

*Elephant with howdah* 67.26

Paste: off-white

Glaze: transparent turquoise

Decoration: underglaze painted in blue

Height: 22.9 cm. (9 in.); length: 15.0 cm. (5 7/8 in.); width: 8.5 cm. (3 3/8 in.)

Iran, Seljuk period, early 13th century

This purely ornamental sculptural piece is in the form of an elephant carrying a howdah. The elephant wears a crown decorated with two rows of sunken circles and the large shields covering its ears are adorned with roundels.

The howdah is in the shape of a pavilion with a flat roof; in the center of the roof is a small cone while a pierced parapet encircles the edges. The pavilion is open on four sides with pointed horseshoe arches. A single figure sits inside and the driver perches on the neck of the elephant.

Large areas of iridescence cover the object, obliterating most of the underglaze blue decoration which was applied in bold streaks.

Although nonfunctional ceramic sculpture in the round is relatively rare in Islamic art, there exist several figurines of elephants with howdahs. Two of these are in the Archaeological Museum in Tehran (no. 3341 is published in E. Grube, "Islamic Sculpture: Ceramic Figures," *Oriental Art*, vol. XII, no. 1, [Autumn, 1966], pp. 167-75, fig. 18; and in *7000 Years of Iranian Art*, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C., 1964-65, no. 645; the second elephant is illustrated in Bahrami, pl. XXIII). A third figurine is in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (no. 65.1271).

With the exception of one example in Tehran (no. 3341), which shows musicians in the pavilion, the remaining three reveal several consistent features. They all have howdahs whose construction is identical to the Freer piece; there is a single figure seated inside the pavilion with the driver placed in front, on the elephant's neck; the elephant itself bears a crown and has large discs over its ears.

These figurines probably represent a folk tradition or a literary episode in which a personage travels on an elephant. The same theme occurs on contemporary overglaze-painted bowls with princely figures riding on elephants (see No. 39 and the ensuing discussion).



أحمد محمد علي

الملك محمد علي

الملك محمد علي



**27\*** *Jug with single handle, high straight neck and low splayed foot* 69.27

Paste: off-white

Glaze: opaque white

Decoration: overglaze painted in brownish-red luster

Height: 18.4 cm. (7 1/4 in.); diameter: 14.0 cm. (5 1/2 in.)

Iran, Seljuk period, early 13th century

The single-handled jug is decorated in horizontal zones which alternate luster painted motifs with those executed in reserve. The slender handle has a thumb-rest, similar to the examples seen in Numbers 15 and 32.

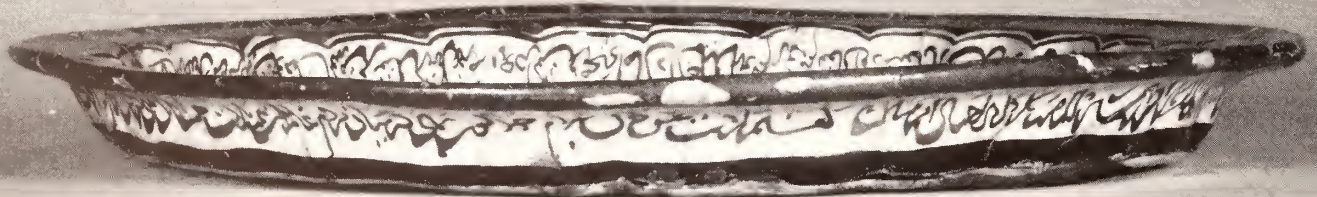
The neck is divided into three bands: a *naskhi* inscription written in reserve is followed by a *kufic* panel placed against spirals and terminated by a zone decorated with radiating strokes.

The shoulder reveals a series of eleven flying birds painted in reserve while spirals fill in the background. On the widest part of the body there is another panel with a cursive inscription. The lowest area, above the unglazed foot, shows a scroll composed of five leaves with minute spirals placed between them.

There are inscriptions on the handle and inside the neck. The identification of these inscriptions, which are in Persian and most likely from a poem, has not been satisfactorily established.

The Freer jug reveals some of the stylistic characteristics associated with Kashan, such as plump birds flying with one wing raised above the other, rounded heart-shaped leaves with serrate edges and small spirals filling in the background. Similar examples, attributed to Gurgan, were published by Mehdi Bahrani (pls. LVIII and LXXXII).







Paste: off-white

Glaze: opaque white

Decoration: overglaze painted in brownish-red luster

Height: 3.7 cm. (1 7/16 in.); diameter: 35.2 cm. (13 7/8 in.)

Iran, Seljuk period, dated December 1210

Signed by Sayyid Shams al-Din al-Hasani

This plate, which has twenty-nine scallops on its walls, represents a figure sleeping by a pool, accompanied by a horse and five other personages. The pool in the exergue shows a nude female figure surrounded by swimming fish.

Bands of inscriptions appear on the flattened rim as well as on both sides of the walls.

The Arabic inscription on the rim has been published (E. Combe, J. Sauvaget and G. Wiet, *Répertoire Chronologique d'Épigraphie Arabe*, Cairo, 1937, vol. X, no. 3672, pp. 52-53):

السعادة والسلامة والكرامة والنعمة والمنة الأمير اسفهلار  
الكبير العالم العادل المؤيد المظفر المنصور المجرب المجاهد  
سيف الملوك والدين نصرة الإسلام والمسلمين وسيد  
الملوك والسلاطين سيد الأمراء . . . . .  
أمير المؤمنين أعز الله أنصاره وضاخف إقتداره ط صنع  
السيد شمس الدين الحسيني في شهر جمادى الاخر سنة  
سبع وستمائة هـ

Happiness and safety and generosity and favor and grace to the amir (esfehslar?), the great, the learned, the just, the supporter, the conqueror, the victorious, the experienced, the champion of the faith, the sword of the kings and the faith, the one who brings victory to Islam and the Muslims, the leader of the kings and sultans, the leader of princes . . . . . the amir of the faithful, may his defenders be endeared to God and his power be doubled . . .

Work of Sayyid Shams al-Din al-Hasani in the month of Jumada II of the year 607 H.

The Persian inscriptions on the walls have not been read.

Aside from the Freer example, four other pieces were pressed from the same mold which had twenty-nine scallops on its walls. Three of these are luster-painted (Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery*, pl. 62A, dated 1207; W. Denny, "Some Islamic Objects in the Gardner Museum," *Fenway Court*, 1971, pp. 3-13, fig. 8; *Museum für Islamische Kunst: Katalog*, Berlin, 1971, no. 375). The fourth plate is painted in black under a turquoise glaze (Ertinghausen, "Evidence," p. 62, pl. 24). This mold must have been used between 1207 and 1210, as suggested from the two dated examples.

The unique theme of the Freer plate has been expertly analysed by Richard Ertinghausen and Grace Guest who interpret the fish, water, woman and horse through mystic metaphors used by the Sufi poets and assigned the piece to Kashan ("The Iconography of a Kashan Luster Plate," *Ars Orientalis*, vol. IV [1961], pp. 25-64. Also published in Pope, *Survey*, pl. 708; and Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery*, pl. 64B).







- 29\* *Bowl with flaring sides, straight rim and low slightly splayed foot* 40.22  
Paste: off-white  
Glaze: opaque white  
Decoration: overglaze painted in brownish-gold luster  
Height: 8.3 cm. (3 5/16 in.); diameter: 20.0 cm. (7 7/8 in.)  
Iran, Seljuk period or later, 13th century

A galloping falconer, painted in reserve, fills the center of the bowl, enclosed by two bands of inscriptions. Branches with split-leaves and spirals adorn the background while the body of the horse is decorated with speckles and the garments of the rider show a large floral scroll enhanced with dots and circles. A halo appears behind the head of the figure who wears a most unusual headdress, depicted as having a raised front with feathers (?) attached to the back.

The inner band of the inscriptions, written in cursive script, is unintelligible due to excessive repairs. The outer band is filled with a simulated *kufic* design, repeating the letters *alif-lam-kaf*. It has been suggested that a possible reading is: *الحق*, or “the Truth,” which frequently appears on ceramics. Spirals and dots also appear behind the outer inscription.

The exterior reveals a freely executed arabesque composed of curving strokes and dots.

The sketchy drawing and the rather careless execution of the motifs suggest that this bowl was either made during the second half of the thirteenth century, preserving the decorative elements associated with the earlier Kashan pieces, or that it was executed during the Seljuk period in a secondary and provincial center, inspired by the Kashan style (published in Pope, *Survey*, pl. 714B). If the interpretation of the elements in the headdress as feathers is correct, then the style could be associated with early Ilkhanid miniatures in which feathered hats are worn by the personages.







- 30\*** *Large bowl with flaring sides, flattened rim and low foot* 57.21  
Paste: off-white  
Glaze: opaque white  
Decoration: overglaze painted in brownish-gold luster  
Height: 7.5 cm. (2 15/16 in.); diameter: 43.2 cm. (17 in.)  
Iran, Seljuk period, late 12th-early 13th century

Similar in subject matter to the previous example, this bowl also represents a youthful rider painted in reserve, placed against a floral arabesque background. On the rim there are two bands which intersect at intervals. The exterior of the bowl originally had a thin luster strip which is now mostly deteriorated.

The carefree and rather haphazardly executed arabesque covering the background of the main theme contains branches with large palmettes, buds, split-leaves and funnel-shaped blossoms. The rider and horse are drawn in the same loose style; bold circles appear on the body of the horse while the garment of the rider has large dots. The figure wears a turban over his shoulder-length hair and a halo surrounds his head.

The above features are characteristic elements found on a series of luster bowls. All are painted in reserve with large floral elements appearing behind the main figures. Some of these represent single animals, such as griffins and birds, while others show human figures. A similar example in Berlin shows a seated figure playing a lute (*Museum für Islamische Kunst: Katalog*, no. 24, pl. 50); two other bowls, both with riders, are owned by the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Cleveland Museum of Art (Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery*, pls. 52C and 53C; also Pope, *Survey*, pls. 632 and 633). The same style appears on two pieces at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, one representing a single seated figure and the other showing a crowded composition with a king surrounded by four attendants (J. W. Allan, *Medieval Middle Eastern Pottery*, Oxford, 1971, pls. 29 and 30). These wares are generally attributed to Rayy and are dated in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century.





- 31\*** *Large jug with single handle, straight neck and low foot* 12.69  
Paste: off-white  
Glaze: opaque white  
Decoration: overglaze painted in brownish-red luster  
Height: 35.7 cm. (14 1/16 in.); diameter: 20.8 cm. (8 3/16 in.)  
Iran, Seljuk period, late 12th-early 13th century

This piece is executed in the same technique and style as the previously described bowl. The high neck is decorated with two bands which either contain a decorative inscription or a scroll filled with dots. The body is divided into two unequal panels by vertical bands of simulated writing.

The larger panel in the front of the jug contains a polylobed medallion surrounded by large concentric circles, small spirals and dots. The medallion represents a seated man wearing a turban and a garment decorated with roundels. He is bearded and two long locks of hair fall on his shoulders. The background of the figure is filled with an arabesque composed of large buds and leaves, similar to that seen on Number 30.

The smaller panel at the back, below the handle, is decorated with a floral scroll composed of spirals, leaves and dots. The lower portion of the jug has loosely drawn curving leaves.

The shape of the jug and its decorative layout are quite unusual. However, the reserve decoration, the figural style and the decorative elements indicate that it belongs to the group of lusterwares executed around the turn of the thirteenth century and attributed to Rayy. One similar example, which employs an almost identical shape, is owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art (E. Grube, "The Art of Islamic Pottery," *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, vol. XXIII, no. 6 [Feb., 1965], fig. 19).





- 32\*** *Ewer with single handle, straight neck and low foot* 09.370  
Paste: off-white  
Glaze: opaque white  
Decoration: overglaze painted in brownish-gold luster  
Height: 17.9 cm. (7 1/16 in.); diameter: 17.2 cm. (6 3/4 in.)  
Iran, Seljuk period, late 12th-early 13th century

A stylized floral scroll, broken by vertical strokes, decorates the high neck of the ewer. Simulated inscriptions appear on the inner side of the mouth and on the handle. A small spout springs from the shoulder and is attached to the neck.

A frieze of animals, painted in reserve and placed against a large floral scroll, adorns the body. The animals, consisting of a fox, hare, goat and dog, appear to be chasing one another, running around the object. This revolving movement, together with the rhythm of the large swirls in the floral background, accentuates the roundness of the jug and forms a most striking animated composition. The animals and their powerful action are extremely well portrayed. Like the previous pieces, this object is also attributed to Rayy (Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery*, pl. 53A; and Pope, *Survey*, pl. 637A).







**33\*** *Square tile* 09.118  
Paste: off-white  
Glaze: opaque white  
Decoration: overglaze painted in brownish-red luster  
Height: 20.7 cm. (8 3/16 in.); length: 21.8 cm. (8 5/8 in.)  
Iran, Seljuk period, early 13th century

The almost square tile portrays five figures placed in two diagonal rows. It was most likely a part of a larger composition which represented a seated king surrounded by his court. The garments of the figures are decorated with highly ornate patterns consisting of spirals, scrolls and dotted single or triple circles. The background is filled with spirals and a large scroll containing split-leaves. The beardless figures wear caps on their heads while long locks fall on their shoulders. A plain halo surrounds each personage, drawing attention to their faces.

The piece is attributed to Kashan due to such decorative motifs as spirals, dotted circles and large split-leaves which completely cover the surface. The characteristic facial representation with curving eyebrows, almond-shaped eyes, small mouths and broad chins, which were also seen in Numbers 28 and 29, are also associated with the Kashan workshops.

Kashan's reputation for the manufacture of luster tiles was unsurpassed as indicated by a number of signed and dated pieces which range from the beginning of the thirteenth to the middle of the fourteenth century. In fact, the word *kashi* or *kashani*, used to designate tiles in Persian, derives from the name of this renowned city.





**34\*** *Six-pointed star tile* 03.197

Paste: off-white

Glaze: opaque white

Decoration: overglaze painted in brownish-red luster

Height: 14.3 cm. (5 5/8 in.)

Iran, Seljuk period, early 13th century

A gazelle with pointed horns surrounded by floral elements stands in the center of the tile. The body of the animal is decorated with large speckles and triple dots while the background is filled with spirals and tall branches which bear leaves and round blossoms. On the lower point of the star tile there are overlapping roundels, similar to the pattern seen in Number 28, dividing the water from the land.

The spiral fill-ins suggestive of water in the exergue, the plant motifs and patterns on the animal point to the style associated with Kashan, although similar pieces have also been attributed to Gurgan (Bahrami, pls. XLIX, L and LVI).

Luster-painted cross or star-shaped tiles representing human figures, floral motifs and arabesques, at times enclosed by bands of inscriptions, were employed to decorate the surfaces of Seljuk and Ilkhanid buildings. A majority of these tiles portrays various types of animals, stressing the predominance of bestiary in the decorative repertoire of Islamic art.

The upper point of the tile does not belong to this example but is from another contemporary piece.





35\* Bowl with flaring sides, straight rim and low foot 37.5

Paste: off-white

Glaze: opaque white

Decoration: overglaze painted in polychrome colors and gold

Height: 8.7 cm. (3 7/16 in.); diameter: 20.6 cm. (8 1/8 in.)

Iran, Seljuk period, early 13th century

Signed by Ali ibn Yusuf

The inner surface of the bowl is broken into concentric bands, centered around a medallion which portrays an enthroned personage flanked by four attendants. The princely figure sits cross-legged on the throne and holds a cup in one hand. The medallion is enclosed by a band composed of four-pointed gold stars.

A wide frieze of eleven horsemen, riding counterclockwise, encircles the bowl. Above the enthroned personage is a solitary pedestrian pointing to the direction of the galloping horses. He is either placed there to stress the importance of the seated figure and to accentuate the revolving movement of the horses, or the painter simply did not plan this frieze carefully and ran out of space in which to add a twelfth rider.

The outermost band at the rim bears a *kufic* inscription in Arabic:

العز الدائم والإقبال والنصر الغالب والبر العالم  
والدولة والسعادة والسلامة والكرامة ... والمتاع  
... والبقاء اصحاب عمل ... بن يوسف

Power eternal and prosperity superabundant and victory triumphant and beneficence, knowledge and dominion and happiness and safety and generosity . . . and possessions . . . and perpetuity to the owner. The work of . . . ibn Yusuf.

The exterior has a cursive inscription on the upper portion of the walls with a shorter line below it:

العالم والإقبال ... العز القائم والمجد ... نعمة  
السالم ... السعادة والسلامة و ... والدولة  
والسعادة ... البقا اصحابه  
كان علي بن يوسف

Knowledge and prosperity . . . power eternal and good fortune . . . secure favor . . . . . happiness and safety and . . . and dominion and happiness . . . . . perpetuity to the owner. The work of Ali ibn Yusuf.

Due to the signature of the artist, the Freer bowl is an extremely rare example of overglaze-painted wares (R. Ettinghausen, "Two Signed Minai Bowls," *Bulletin of the American Institute for Iranian Art and Archaeology*, vol. V, no. 1, [June, 1937], pp. 29-32).



سیدکمال الدین علی بن ابی طالب علیه السلام  
که در کربلا شهادت دادند و در کربلا شهادت دادند



- 36\* *Bowl with straight sides widening at the rim, high foot* 12.6  
Paste: off-white  
Glaze: opaque turquoise-blue  
Decoration: overglaze painted in polychrome colors and gold  
Height: 9.0 cm. (3 9/16 in.); diameter: 20.7 cm. (8 3/16 in.)  
Iran, Seljuk period, early 13th century

The interior of this piece is decorated with six panels which radiate from a central medallion. A rider appears in the center while a single figure sits in each of the panels on the walls. The seated figures all point to the left, producing a counterclockwise movement, not unlike that of the riders seen in the previous example.

The bands enclosing the medallion, encircling the rim and separating the vertical panels are decorated with *kufic* inscriptions in Arabic which repeat the words:

العالم الحق السعادة السلامة

“The Knowing” and “the Truth” (both of which are epithets of God); “happiness” and “safety.” A thin band of scallops appears at the edge of the rim.

The exterior reveals two rows of cursive inscriptions, but since this portion is repainted the meaning cannot be determined. It is possible that even originally there was a simulated script on the back, as observed in some of the other examples of this type of ware.

The employment of turquoise-blue as the background for the polychrome painted figures is not uncommon in the *minai* wares. Although a majority of these pieces is attributed to Rayy, only a few fragments have been discovered at that site.





**37\*** *Bowl with flaring sides, straight rim and low foot* 45.8

Paste: off-white

Glaze: opaque white

Decoration: overglaze painted in polychrome colors

Height: 8.5 cm. (3 3/8 in.); diameter: 20.3 cm. (8 in.)

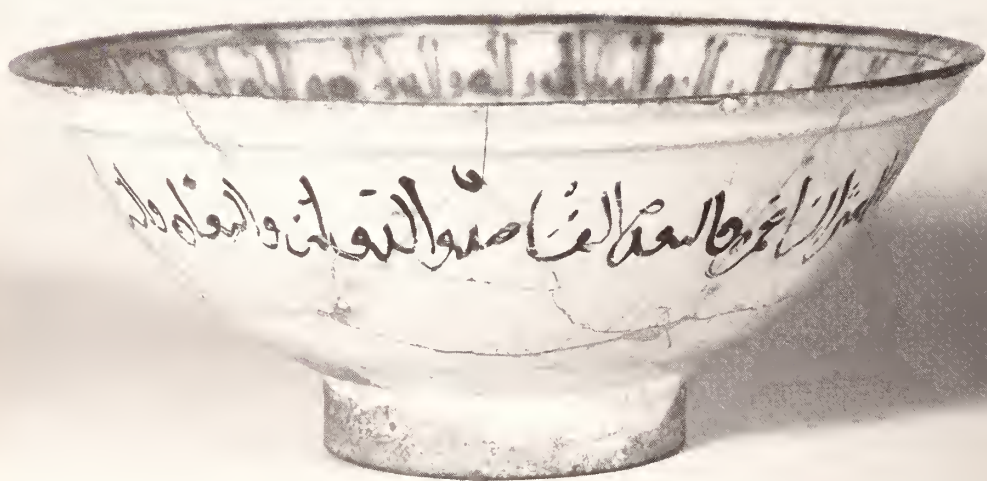
Iran, Seljuk period, late 12th-early 13th century

The decoration of the bowl consists of mounted figures enclosed by wide concentric bands containing *kufic* inscriptions. A single rider appears in the center while six others, depicted as confronting pairs, are portrayed in the outer zone, separated from one another by arabesques and birds. A scalloped border, similar to the one in Number 36, appears on the rim.

The inscription bands with arabesques filling the background resemble the convention used in manuscripts, metalwork and architectural decoration. The inscriptions on the bowl seem to repeat the letters *alif-lam-dal* or *kaf*. It has been suggested that the word, "the Truth," is meant to be conveyed, but this interpretation is highly theoretical.

The exterior rim has a band of intersecting chevrons, filled with spirals and roundels; immediately above the foot is an arabesque border. In the frieze between these two bands are twelve seated figures plus two camels attended by a standing keeper. The figures are separated by trees composed of branches with multi-colored circular leaves, reminiscent of the motifs employed in early thirteenth-century paintings.

The minute scale of the figures and the heavy borders of the panels are rather exceptional to this piece.





38\* *Bowl with flaring sides, straight rim and low foot* 09.130

Paste: off-white

Glaze: opaque white

Decoration: underglaze painted in blue, green and black; overglaze painted in black and gold

Height: 8.4 cm. (3 5/16 in.); diameter: 20.5 cm. (8 1/16 in.)

Iran, Seljuk period, early 13th century

This unique, and possibly incomplete example, is most useful in the understanding of the complicated technique of the *minai* wares. It is decorated with two confronting riders who flank a central tree. The motifs are underglaze painted blue, green and black and enhanced by the addition of overglaze black and touches of gold. In this piece the usual wider range of colors has been omitted in the second firing.

The central composition is enclosed by a *kufic* band which repeats the word *الحق*, or "the Truth."

On the exterior there is a cursive inscription, bestowing the usual auspicious wishes:

العز الدائم والإقبال الزائد والنصر الغالب والعزة  
القائمة والمجد الصاعد والعز السالم و... والسعادة  
... والذولة والسعادة والسلامة

Power eternal and prosperity superabundant and vic-  
tory triumphant and plenty enduring and good fortune  
rising and indisputed power and . . . and happiness . . .  
and dominion and happiness and safety.

The combination of the *kufic* script inside with the cursive outside, and the messages themselves, seem to be the most common repertoire of inscriptions employed in the late twelfth and early thirteenth-century *minai* wares.





39\* Bowl with flaring sides, lobed rim and high splayed foot 27.3

Paste: off-white

Glaze: opaque white

Decoration: overglaze painted in polychrome colors and gold

Height: 8.9 cm. (3 1/2 in.); diameter: 18.6 cm. (7 5/16 in.)

Iran, Seljuk period, late 12th-early 13th century

Made for Amir Abu Nasr Kirmanshah

In the center of the eight-lobed bowl is an elephant with three riders, enclosed by a band of inscriptions. Surrounding this band are eight figures, placed in each lobe, separated by arabesques.

The princely figure in the central medallion rides in an elaborate howdah placed on the elephant while the driver sits on the animal's neck. Behind the main personage is a half-naked black attendant.

The *kufic* inscription, which is in Arabic, reads:

العز الدائم والإقبال الزائد النصر الغالب والعز القائم والجد  
..... والدولة السعادة والكرامة والنعمة والقدرة

Power eternal and prosperity superabundant, victory triumphant and power enduring and good fortune . . . and dominion, happiness and generosity and favor and might.

Each of the eight seated figures in the outer band holds a bowl in one hand and points to the left with the other, attempting to create a counterclockwise movement, concordant with the reading of the inscription.

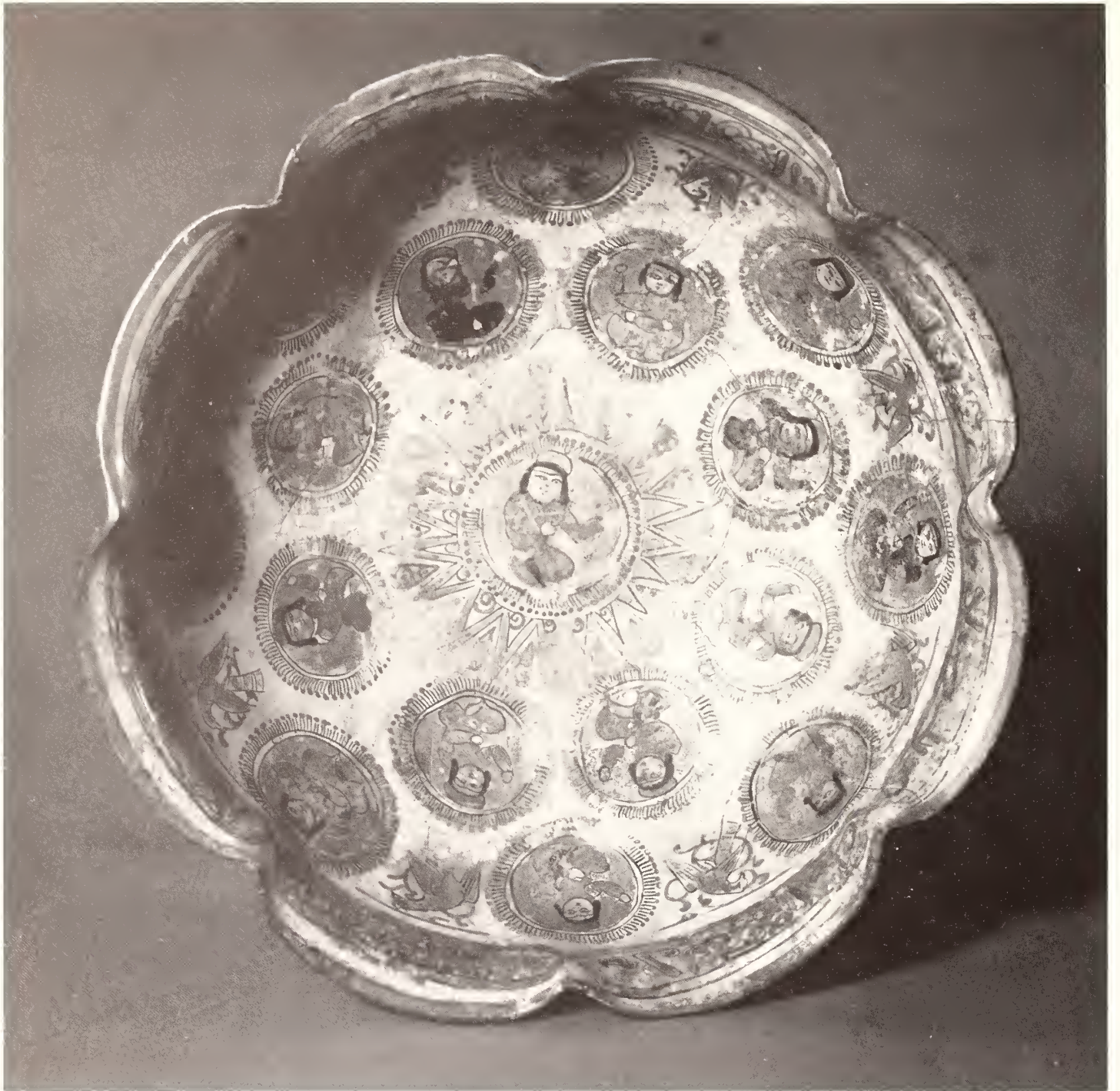
The exterior has a band of cursive Arabic inscription:

عز الأمير الاجل العالم العادل المؤيد المظفر المنصور  
... .. عماد الدين محي الاسلام عضد الدولة  
... .. إجلال الامراء أبو نصر كرمانشاه ... .. و  
الدين لصاحبه

Glory to the most illustrious amir, the learned, the just, the one who upholds God, the conqueror, the victorious, the supporter of religion, one who revives Islam, the essential supporter of the empire . . . . . the model of princes, Abu Nasr Kirmanshah . . . and . . . faith to the owner.

The figure on the elephant has been interpreted as Sapinud, the Indian bride of Bahram Gur (Pope, *Survey*, pl. 663A; and G. Wiet, "Un Bol en Faïence du XIIe Siècle," *Ars Islamica*, vol. I [1934], pp. 118-120; for the story see A. G. Warner and E. Warner, *The Shahnama of Firdausi*, London, 1912, vol. VII, p. 128ff).

There are several other *minai* bowls which portray a similar theme (Pope, *Survey*, pls. 663B, 671 and 692A, the latter of which bears the date 1220) as well as a black-painted turquoise-glazed piece (Pinder-Wilson, pl. 14) and a luster-painted example (Bahrami, pl. LVII, dated 1214 and signed by Muhammad b. Abu Nasr).





40\* *Bowl with flaring sides, lobed rim and low splayed foot* 12.68

Paste: off-white

Glaze: opaque white

Decoration: overglaze painted in polychrome colors and gold

Height: 8.8 cm. (3 1/2 in.); diameter: 20.5 cm. (8 1/16 in.)

Iran, Seljuk period, early 13th century

Three rows of medallions, each with a seated figure, adorn the inner surface of the bowl. The central medallion has a flaming border conceived as triangular rays. The eight medallions in the second and third rows are also enclosed by rays which are drawn as radiating strokes. Birds and arabesques fill in the voids of the outer row while panels with inscriptions appear in the eight lobes of the rim. The inscriptions are written in *kufic* and bestow a series of good wishes:

وَالسَّعَادَةُ وَالنَّصْرُ الْغَالِبُ وَالذُّوْلَةُ وَالرِّبَا ... وَالذُّوْلَةُ  
وَالسَّلَامَةُ ... وَالسَّلَامَةُ وَالْعِزُّ الدَّائِمُ

And happiness and victory triumphant and dominion  
and . . . and dominion and safety . . . . . and safety and  
power eternal.

The exterior of each lobe has a *kufic* phrase which is repeated eight times, containing the words:

العالم الحق

The Knowing, the Truth.

This combination of using the epithets of God on one side of the bowl with longer messages of good wishes on the other was also observed in the previous examples although in reversed order (Nos. 36 and 38). The reading of the decorative inscriptions on this bowl is extremely difficult and the meaning has to be more or less assumed, based on other pieces with similar wordings.

The colors used here are rather limited in number—grayish-blue, red and pink—with an abundant use of gold in the medallions and in the inscriptions.

The composition of the Freer bowl may very well have been inspired by representations of the signs of the zodiac. Medallions with twelve astrological symbols are fairly common in the decoration of metalwork and not too rare in ceramics. The potter here has increased the number of discs and repeated the identical theme seventeen times.

Bowls with eight-lobed rims are frequently encountered in this period, painted in *minai* and luster techniques (No. 39; and other examples in Pope, *Survey*, pls. 650A and 668).







- 41\*** *Bowl with flaring sides, straight rim and low foot* 38.12  
Paste: off-white  
Glaze: opaque white  
Decoration: overglaze painted in polychrome colors and gold  
Height: 8.8 cm. (3 1/2 in.); diameter: 23.0 cm. (9 1/16 in.)  
Iran, Seljuk period, late 12th-early 13th century

This bowl of exceptionally refined execution depicts a royal couple placed against a plain gold ground which has partially deteriorated. Both figures wear highly ornate clothes and have flaming haloes around their heads. The figure on the right is a lady of high rank as suggested by her jeweled headdress consisting of a diadem with a raised palmette in the center, attached to her head by fluttering ribbons. She wears long looped earrings and an anklet, and holds a stem-cup in one hand while gesturing towards her companion with the other. Her elaborate outfit is composed of panels depicting seated figures.

The male figure, who plays a lyre, is attired in an embroidered garment adorned with arabesques and stars. On his head is a cap with a high portion in the center, often interpreted as a jeweled ornament worn on the turbans of princes. A wide blue band adorned with golden diamonds encircles the rim.

The exterior has a blue band with alternating stylized leaves and blossoms. Below this band are six large arabesques interspersed with small cartouches. The foot, as well as the base, reveal a blue glaze.

Due to the exquisite drawing of the figures (particularly the faces and the hands) and the remarkable details on the garments, this piece is often classified under "first royal style" and attributed to Kashan (Pope, *Survey*, pl. 652). The theme of a seated royal couple occurs on several contemporary pieces, executed in *minai*, luster, or black-painted and blue-glazed wares (e.g., No. 42; Pope, *Survey*, pls. 651-53; Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery*, pls. 58B, 68A and 84A; Bahrami, pls. XXXVIII, LXXII and LXXIII which is dated 1215). However, this is the only example in which the female figure outranks the male who is clearly entertaining the "queen."





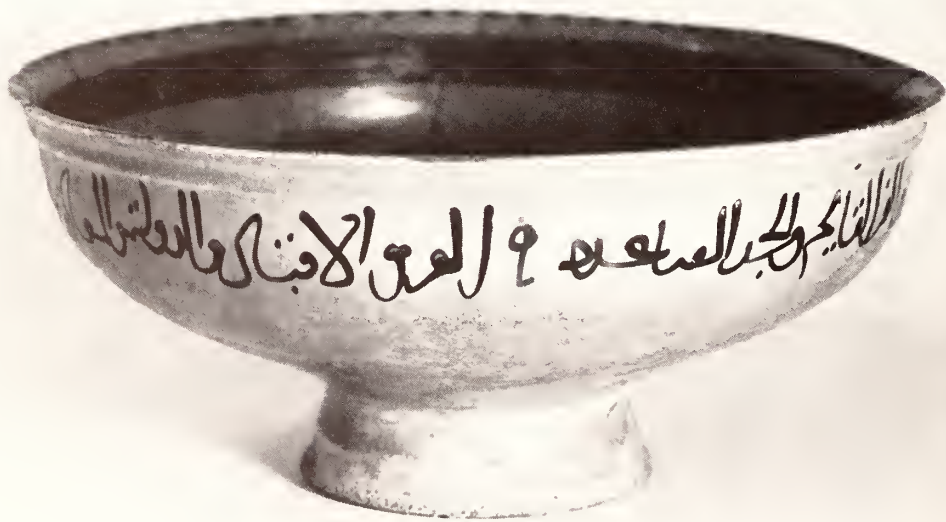
- 42\*** *Bowl with flaring sides, straight rim and low foot* 25.4  
Paste: off-white  
Glaze: opaque white  
Decoration: in relief; overglaze painted in polychrome colors and gold  
Height: 8.1 cm. (3 3/16 in.); diameter: 20.4 cm. (8 1/16 in.)  
Iran, Seljuk period, late 12th-early 13th century

Very close in subject and composition to the previous bowl, this example shows a female figure on the left, playing a lute, while the male personage sits opposite her. Some of the details are executed in low relief, gilded and outlined in red. These include the birds and dots on the lady's garment, the armbands and roundels on the outfit of the male figure, the scrolls adorning their haloes and the band on the rim. In this bowl, the figures appear slightly oversize and the scene is crowded without the pleasing spatial arrangement observed in Number 41.

The exterior has a plain green band on the rim, followed by a frieze of seven harpies intersected by medallions enclosing birds. Arabesques fill in the voids behind the harpies and birds while loosely executed palmettes appear above the foot. The disintegration of the surface has resulted in a creamy-beige background with the original clear white color visible in only a few areas.

The headdress of the princely figure on the right, with a high triangle in the front, can be traced to the contemporary manuscript illustrations, indicating that the outfits depicted by both media reflect the traditional costumes of the period.

Overglazed polychrome pottery with details represented in gilded relief was fairly common in the late Seljuk wares (Pope, *Survey*, pls. 654, 655 and 677-682).





- 43\*** *Bowl with flaring sides, everted rim and high foot* 09.112  
 Paste: off-white  
 Glaze: opaque turquoise-blue  
 Decoration: overglaze painted in polychrome colors  
 Height: 8.8 cm. (3 1/2 in.); diameter: 20.5 cm. (8 1/16 in.)  
 Iran, Seljuk period, mid-13th century

This piece belongs to a group of *minai* bowls in which the arabesque is the main theme of decoration. Intersecting branches with split-leaves and palmettes radiate from a central rosette and form a symmetrical design. The motifs, painted in blue and red with black outlines and white details, appear against a turquoise-blue ground. A scalloped border encircles the rim.

The exterior has a band of cursive Arabic inscription which employs the popular phrases observed in several other examples:

والإقبال الراجد والنصر الغالب والعزة القائمة والمجد  
 الصاعد والعز والإقبال والدولة والسعادة  
 والسلامة والكرامة والعزة وال... والعظمة وال...  
 العز الدائم

And prosperity superabundant and victory triumphant and power enduring and good fortune rising and power and prosperity and dominion and happiness and safety and generosity and power and . . . might and . . . power eternal.

*Minai* wares decorated with arabesques are often attributed to Sava and a single shard of this type was discovered in Rayy. There is still no positive proof as to the provenance of this particular form of design although it seems to have been produced in quantities (Pope, *Survey*, pls. 694B-697).





- 44\*** *Beaker with straight sides flaring at the rim and low foot* 28.2  
Paste: off-white  
Glaze: opaque white  
Decoration: overglaze painted in polychrome colors  
Height: 12.0 cm. (4 3/4 in.); diameter: 11.2 cm. (4 7/16 in.)  
Iran, Seljuk period, early 13th century

This unique beaker represents the story of Bihzan and Manizha from the *Shahnameh* in three horizontal zones, each containing four separate scenes. Its iconography was first identified in an article by M. Diakonov ("Un Vase en faïence avec des illustrations de Shah-Namé," *Travaux de Department Oriental, Musée de Hermitage*, vol. I [1939], pp. 317-26). The episodes on the beaker have been analysed in detail by Grace Guest ("Notes on a Thirteenth Century Beaker," *Ars Islamica*, vol. X [1943], pp. 148-152).

The narrative cycle begins with the *Prelude* in which the poet Firdausi visits his beloved who tells him the story of Bihzan and Manizha (lower plate on opposite page, the scene on the upper right). The story progresses toward the left, spread to three zones. It begins with a scene in which Kai Khosrow, the Iranian king, is feasting Bihzan prior to his departure to fight the terrible boars. In the ensuing panels Bihzan successfully overcomes the boars and meets Manizha, the daughter of Afrasiab, the Turanian king. The young couple fall in love but Afrasiab, furious at the affair, has Bihzan imprisoned and thrown into a well. The great Iranian hero, Rustam, comes to the rescue and, lifting the colossal stone blocking the well, frees Bihzan (Pope, *Survey*, pl. 660B; Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery*, pl. 70B; for the complete story see Warner and Warner, vol. III, pp. 287-345).

The decoration on the beaker is of great significance. It is the earliest and the most extensive representation of this episode, executed about a hundred years prior to its appearance in manuscript illustrations. This fact indicates that the *Shahnameh* was popularly illustrated in books, or perhaps even on walls, with sufficient models available to the potter. The format of the scenes, conceived as a series of small rectangular units with the figures lined up horizontally, is very close to the style of fourteenth-century *Shahnameh* miniatures and proves that this scheme had been fully developed by the beginning of the thirteenth century. The beaker also has the earliest portrayal of the poet Firdausi, who is omitted in the later *Shahnameh* illustrations.

The Freer beaker is in immaculate condition with its blue, green, red, black and white pigments brightly preserved as well as the rosy-beige tones which are used for the faces. Blue bands appear on the rim and above the foot while the interior has a green border just below the rim. Beakers of this shape and size are not uncommon in *minai* wares, but generally represent riders or single figures.





45\* *Inkwell with four pen-sockets* 34.18

Paste: off-white

Glaze: opaque white

Decoration: overglaze painted in polychrome colors

Height: 7.7 cm. (3 1/16 in.); diameter: 10.9 cm. (4 5/16 in.)

Iran, Seljuk period, early 13th century

The four-sided inkwell has an open pen-socket on each corner while dancing figures are painted in the panels between them. On the top, corresponding to each figure, are four sphinxes who walk in a counterclockwise direction. The dancing figures, depicted in three-quarter view, are also oriented to the left. The pen-sockets are adorned with freely executed arabesques whose palmettes extend to the top, separating the sphinxes. These vertical motifs also intersect the *kufic* inscription which appears on the top register of the sides.

The Arabic inscription repeats the usual auspicious phrases employed on *minai* pieces:

العز الدائم والم... الزائد والنصر الغالب ... قائم  
والدولة والنصر الغالب والد...

Power eternal and . . . superabundant and victory  
triumphant . . . enduring and dominion and victory triumphant and . . .

The wide range of colors on this piece excludes red but includes blue, green, purple, yellowish-brown, black and white.





**46\*** *Jug with single handle, small neck and low foot* 29.9

Paste: off-white

Glaze: opaque white

Decoration: underglaze painted in blue, green and black; overglaze painted in golden luster

Height: 18.0 cm. (7 1/8 in.); diameter: 14.8 cm. (5 13/16 in.)

Iran, Seljuk period, early 13th century

This unusually shaped jug with a bulbous body and a disproportionately small bottle-neck reveals a variation in the technique of thirteenth-century ceramics. The blue, green and black pigments were applied under the slightly opacified white glaze and rose during the firing, blending in with the glaze. The process is called "in-glaze painting." Then the overglaze luster was painted on and the piece was refired at a lower temperature. This technique resembles the two firings employed by the *minai* wares.

In this example the luster painting appears in the background of the wide zone of the body. It is also used in the *kufic* and cursive inscriptions on the shoulder and neck, and in the arabesque band above the foot.

Three groups of figures decorate the body of the jug: two male personages face a female companion to the left of the handle while each of the remaining two groups contains a man and a woman. The figures wear ornate garments adorned with spirals and leaves, or solid bands alternating with scrolls. Each personage bears a headdress and a halo; the men are all beardless and have flowing locks whereas the women are shown with longer hair and elaborate earrings. The figures in the groups are actively engaged in conversation, gesturing with their hands.

The overall patterns on the garments and refined drawing of the faces and hands, and the luster decoration painted in reserve with spirals, birds and split-leaves, reveal the style identified with Kashan (Pope, *Survey*, pl. 690).

The cursive inscription on the shoulder is illegible due to excessive restoration and repainting; the *kufic* inscription on the neck seems to be ornamental.





**47\*** *Jug with single handle, high neck and low splayed foot* 29.10

Paste: off-white

Glaze: opaque white

Decoration: in relief; overglaze painted in polychrome colors and gold

Height: 14.5 cm. (5 11/16 in.); diameter: 13.7 cm. (5 3/8 in.)

Iran, Seljuk period, early 13th century

The technique of this jug is similar to that on the bowl described in Number 42 in which the details were also rendered in low relief, gilded and outlined in red. The decoration on this example consists of bands of arabesques encircling the neck and body, painted in blue, green and red. The execution of the narrow gilded scroll on the shoulder is very close to that employed in the haloes and on the rim of the bowl mentioned above. Inside the neck of the jug is a simulated inscription written in overglaze blue.

This type of pottery, classified as “ware with polychrome and gilded relief ornament” (Pope, *Survey*, pls. 677-685) is attributed either to Rayy or Sava, having originated in Kashan. However, there is no proof that they were executed in Rayy and since neither Sava nor Kashan has been properly excavated, the provenance of this particular group is far from solved.





48\*

*Ewer with single handle, low neck and high splayed foot*

32.23

Paste: off-white

Glaze: transparent

Decoration: carved and pierced; overglaze painted in polychrome colors and gold

Height: 14.1 cm. (5 9/16 in.); diameter: 14.6 cm. (5 3/4 in.)

Iran, Seljuk period, late 12th-early 13th century

Even though the surface of this piece is damaged, it is a superb example revealing a masterful combination of the themes and techniques which were prevalent at the height of the Seljuk period.

The neck is adorned with a *kufic* inscription which is in relief, gilded and outlined in red:

والبقا لصاحب العز القايمه والاقبال والدولة السا...  
الكرامة السلامة

And perpetuity to the owner, power enduring and prosperity and dominion . . . generosity, safety.

A simulated cursive inscription appears on the inner side of the neck.

The shoulder shows a double band filled with four-pointed stars, also gilded and outlined in red. Another identical band is placed below the wide portion of the body which represents a group of riders. To the left of the handle are three mounted figures, engaged in a polo game, whereas on the other side of the ewer two hunters attack a lion. A solitary horse, with its owner seated on the ground beside it, appears adjacent to the handle. The figures, executed in low relief, are painted in blue, green, red, purple, brown and black. The arabesque background is carved and pierced with the transparent glaze filling in the holes. A frieze of palmettes adorns the zone above the foot.

The most unusual portion is the base which represents a mounted figure set against a carved and pierced arabesque ground. This area is not painted but covered with the transparent glaze.

A small bird functions as a thumb-rest on the curved handle. The spout is attached to the neck and bent outward. Both the handle and spout are decorated with gilded motifs.

The modelling and drawing of the figures, their placement and interaction are exquisitely rendered. Although the style of the figures and the combined techniques of carving and piercing suggest a Kashan origin, the inscription and four-pointed stars belong to the features attributed to Rayy. This piece, a masterpiece of the potter's art, proves that a majority of Islamic pottery cannot be assigned to a specific site since the artisans continually moved on to new centers and markets, transporting their styles and techniques, and influencing the output of the local workshops.





49

*Twelve-pointed star tile*

11.319

Paste: off-white

Glaze: opaque white

Decoration: in relief; overglaze painted in polychrome colors and gold

Height: 18.5 cm. (7 1/4 in.)

Iran, Seljuk period, late 12th century

The tile, which represents a mounted figure attacking a dragon, is executed in the *minai* technique with raised and gilded motifs. Although the surface has been abraded, gilding can still be observed in the floral elements around the central figure as well as on certain portions of his outfit (such as the collar and belt) and on the trappings of his mount. The remaining sections are painted in blue, green, red, pink and black.

The subject represented, a warrior fighting a dragon, recalls the feats of Gushtasp or Bahram Gur from the *Shahnameh* (for the same theme see No. 50, reverse).

The *minai* technique was rarely applied to Iranian tiles which were generally luster and underglaze painted. However, there exist two examples which are similar in technique as well as in subject to the Freer tile; both of these are overglaze-painted with gilded and raised motifs and represent epic themes (Pope, *Survey*, pls. 679 and 680A).

Islamic tiles are usually rectangular in shape or formed as crosses and eight-pointed stars which fit together when assembled on the walls. Twelve-pointed stars are quite exceptional.

The provenance of *minai* tiles, like *minai* pottery, is unsolved. A singular and fragmentary *minai* tile which represents a dragon was found in Rayy; yet there is no other indication that this city executed overglaze-painted tiles (this fragment is in the study collection of the Freer Gallery).

The only *minai* tiles found *in situ* come from Anatolia. They adorned the palaces of the Seljuk Sultan Alaeddin Keykubad around Konya and are dated in the mid-thirteenth century. Since the Anatolian Seljuk wares were strongly influenced by those executed in Iran and Syria, a considerable number of *minai* tiles must have been made in Iran even though few examples seem to have survived.







50\* *Large bowl with flaring sides, everted rim and low foot* 43·3

Paste: off-white

Glaze: opaque white

Decoration: overglaze painted in polychrome colors and gold

Height: 11.1 cm. (4 3/8 in.); diameter: 47.8 cm. (18 13/16 in.)

Iran, Seljuk period, early 13th century

One of the largest and most spectacular *minai* bowls in existence shows a group of warriors attacking a fortress. The scene is conceived horizontally with a total disregard of the shape of the object, suggesting that it would have been better suited for a manuscript illustration or a wall painting. This particular subject is unknown in literary or historical sources and seems to be a singular event preserved only on this bowl. The potter uses the conventions of the miniaturists and attempts to identify the chief protagonists by placing their names beside their heads.

The attacking army rushes toward the fortress in parallel rows on the right. The fortress, situated on top of a rocky mountain on the left, has tiles covering the lower part of its walls with openings above, from which archers defend their stronghold. On top of the fortress is a catapult and around the parapet is a barrier composed of shields, weapons and armor.

The composition includes a series of small vignettes, such as supplies brought in by an elephant, dancing girls on horses, a man falling off the fortress, single encounters and riders combatting with foot soldiers. Dead naked figures stripped of their armor, rocks, plants, trees and birds fill the voids.

The great rush of the attackers, arrested at the fortress, is counteracted by a group of figures on the rim which, although confronting in areas, produce a revolving movement, adding to the drama, excitement and confusion of the battle.

The inscriptions above the heads of the eight larger and more significant personages indicate that they are Seljuk warriors as their names incorporate Turkish elements:

أمير سابق الدين

Amir Sabik al-Din

بها الدين محمد شير باريك

Baha al-Din Muhammad Shir Barik (or Berig)

شمس الدين الياس

Shams al-Din Ilyas

بيك ارسلان اوشى

Beg Arslan Ushi

خداوند مظفر الدولة والدين

Khudavend Muzaffar al-Daula wa-'l-Din





شمس ... بن منكبة

Shams (al-Din or ibn) Mengelbeh

بن محمد

ibn Muhammad

(... محاطرة) بسرلندا

Pesar-i Lank (?)

There is also a fragmentary inscription written in Persian below a group of figures on the lower portion of the rim. The writing is quite difficult to decipher with only two words clearly visible: Baha al-Din and Pesar-i Lank. It is hoped that in the future more research will be devoted to the complete transcription of this phrase.

On the exterior of the bowl there is a band of *kufic* inscriptions which repeats the usual words of good wishes encountered on previous pieces:

والدولة وال... والدولة... والسلامة... وسلامة  
والعز الدائم والسعادة والنصر الغالب و...

And dominion and . . . and dominion . . . and safety  
. . . . . and safety and power eternal and happiness and  
victory triumphant and . . .

The outer walls have five scenes, separated by trees. These scenes represent a figure slaying a dragon with a sword, another shooting a wolf with his bow and arrow, the third clubbing a panther with a mace, a fourth using a bow and arrow to attack a fantastic creature; and in the last unit, two figures confront, one of which holds a lion-headed mace and a cheetah on a leash. These princely figures are drawn in larger scale than those on the inside of the bowl and appear to represent heroic deeds such as the overcoming of wild and fantastic creatures, possibly taken from the *Shahnameh* stories.

The incorporation of legendary feats with a specific historic event suggests the desire to glorify this battle through an association with the deeds of the great heroes, thus heightening its significance. Even though the warriors on the Freer bowl have not been historically identified, their victorious battle has been preserved through the ages (Pope, *Survey*, pls. 674-675; and Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery*, pl. 70C). A comparable subject is found on a tile in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, which is inscribed "the Iranians leaving the fortress of Furud" (Pope, *Survey*, pl. 706).

The original condition of the bowl was extremely fragmentary with several pieces missing from the rim. The colors employed exceed the usual range found on *minai* pieces and include blue, green, red, purple, brown, black, white, pink and gold.





51\* *Bowl with flaring sides, straight rim and flat base* 38.13

Paste: off-white

Glaze: opaque white

Decoration: overglaze painted in polychrome colors

Height: 8.6 cm. (3 3/8 in.); diameter: 20.5 cm. (8 1/16 in.)

Iran, Seljuk period, early 13th century

The unusual composition of the inner surface of the bowl reveals three horizontal rows of figures, the top and bottom of which depict four sphinxes walking below an axial arabesque unit enclosed by birds. The elements in the lower row are painted upside-down, facing the center.

The band in the middle portrays a royal couple in the center, flanked by three figures on either side. The figures on the right are musicians who play a lyre, tambourine and flute; those on the left are possibly dancers and singers. A *kufic* inscription, painted in reserve on a blue ground encircles the rim:

العزّ الدائم والإقبال ال... والنصر الغالب والعزّ  
القائم والمجد... والدولة والسعادة والسلامة  
والكرامة والدولة والسلامة والكرامة والبركة  
والدولة والبقاء لصاحبه

Power eternal and prosperity . . . and victory triumphant and power enduring and good fortune . . . dominion and happiness and safety and generosity and dominion and safety and generosity and blessing and dominion and perpetuity to the owner.

The decoration of the exterior is extremely original: on the base of the bowl there is a medallion representing an enthroned personage, enclosed by a radiating border and a wide panel sprinkled with six-petaled blossoms. In the band below the rim are six seated conversing couples, separated by arabesques.

The placement of an enthroned figure on the base of a bowl is unique. The piece was fired upside-down, resting on its rim. The justification for decorating the base in this manner could be that the design becomes clearly visible only when the bowl is held up for drinking, thus adding interest to the object.





**52\*** *Bowl with flaring sides, straight rim and high splayed foot* 67.25

Paste: off-white

Glaze: transparent turquoise-blue

Decoration: underglaze painted in black with touches of blue

Height: 10.5 cm. (4 1/8 in.); diameter: 20.0 cm. (7 7/8 in.)

Iran, Seljuk period, early 13th century

The bowl represents a bearded and crowned personage sitting cross-legged on a throne. Four attendants, grouped as two pairs, appear behind the throne. The garment of the enthroned figure is decorated with roundels enclosing large dots while the attendants wear outfits adorned with spirals or circles and dots. Braided bands, strokes and small crosses decorate the throne and spirals fill in the large canopy which hangs over the figures.

Two long branches laden with symmetrical leaves and rounded blossoms flank the enthroned personage while additional leaves and blossoms appear in the voids.

With the exception of the haloes surrounding the heads of the figures, the entire surface of the bowl is covered with minute details, producing a rich and varied overall composition.

A plain band encircles the scene while overlapping leaves with radiating strokes adorn the rim.

On the exterior a thin blue band encloses the cursive inscription placed on the rim. The Persian inscription, painted in reserve, has not been properly deciphered, but it has been suggested that it contains verses from a poem (Bahrami, pp. 54-57, pl. XVI). Below the inscription, six arabesque units alternate with stylized willow-sprays, rather carelessly executed and unevenly spaced.

The figural style and the motifs employed suggest that the piece was made in the workshops of Kashan which produced a series of wares painted in black and blue under a transparent turquoise or clear glaze. It has also been attributed to Gurgan by Mehdi Bahrami (pp. 56-57). Dated examples of this type of ware indicate that they were executed in the first half of the thirteenth century.





- 53\*** *Bowl with flaring sides, straight rim and high splayed foot* 67.24  
Paste: off-white  
Glaze: transparent turquoise-blue  
Decoration: underglaze painted in black with touches of blue  
Height: 10.8 cm. (4 1/4 in.); diameter: 20.3 cm. (8 in.)  
Iran, Seljuk period, early 13th century

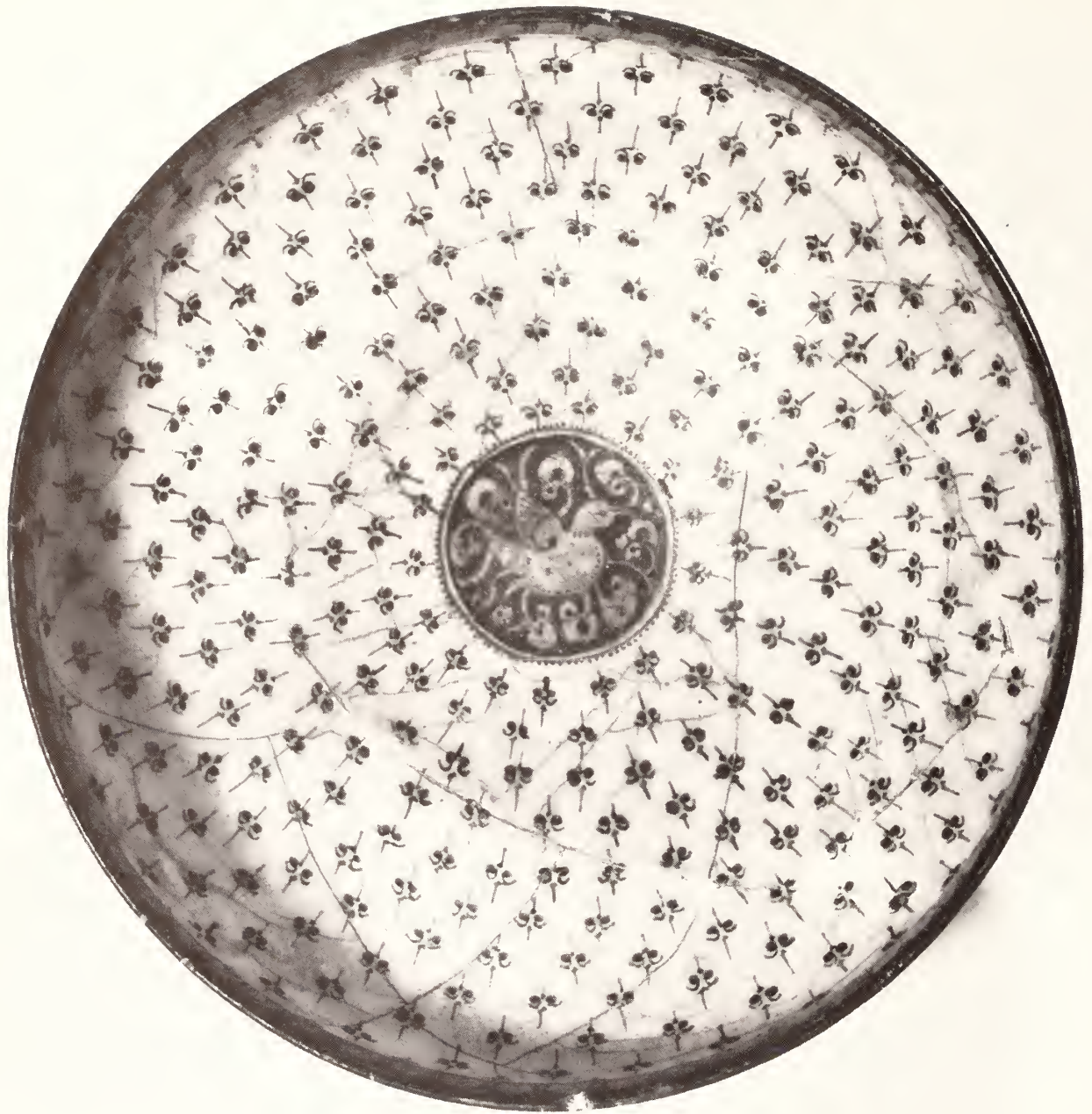
The companion piece to the previous bowl portrays an enthroned queen with two attendants standing behind her throne. Conceived as a matching pair, this example and the “king” bowl are almost identical. The canopy seen here is curved and only two attendants accompany the royal personage. The patterns used on the garments of the figures, on the throne and in the background reveal the same motifs and manner of execution observed in Number 52.

The profile of the bowl and the decoration of the exterior are also consistent with the previous example. The Persian inscription has not been successfully translated due to excessive iridescence covering this portion. Below the inscription band are seven arabesque units interspersed with small willow-sprays, carefully and evenly placed.

This bowl, like the previous one, has been attributed to Gurgan by Mehdi Bahrani (pp. 56-57, pl. XVII) although its stylistic features suggest Kashan as the provenance.

The most remarkable aspect of these two bowls is that they represent the royal figures individually, attended by their own personal retinues.

The portrayal of a female personage as the main theme is most unusual as women are often shown in the company of men. It must be assumed that the “queen” represented on the Freer bowl was of considerable importance. She is also depicted larger than the king and the decoration of the exterior of the bowl is far more carefully rendered. It is possible that she commissioned the two bowls, one honoring herself and the other her mate.





- 54\*** *Bowl with flaring sides, straight rim and high splayed foot* 10.9  
 Paste: off-white  
 Glaze: transparent  
 Decoration: underglaze painted in blue and black  
 Height: 10.4 cm. (4 1/8 in.); diameter: 19.5 cm. (7 11/16 in.)  
 Iran, Seljuk period, early 13th century

The diminutive medallion in the center of the bowl depicts a flying bird placed against a floral arabesque ground, painted in blue on black. Around the rim is a band of blue *kufic* letters, also with a black background. The remaining portion of the bowl is filled with radiating minute flowerets composed of small spirals and strokes.

The inscription on the rim is highly decorative and may be derived from the repetition of the words:

العالم الحق

The Knowing, the Truth.

These two epithets of God were frequently employed on contemporary ceramics.

The exterior, reminiscent of the previous two bowls (Nos. 52 and 53), shows a thin blue line at the rim followed by a band of cursive inscription written in reserve on the black ground; the inscription, which is in Persian, has not been translated. Black willow-sprays alternate with blue blossoms on the exterior walls.

The style of the flying bird, tiny flowers and the willow-sprays suggest the work of Kashan potters (Pope, *Survey*, pl. 733B). In fact, some of the wasters found in Kashan are painted in black under a clear or blue glaze and reveal the same motifs (Pope, "New Findings," pp. 161-162, figs. 10 and 11).





- 55\*** *Bowl with straight sides widening at the rim and high foot* 67.2  
Paste: off-white  
Glaze: transparent turquoise-blue  
Decoration: underglaze painted in blue and black  
Height: 8.9 cm. (3 1/2 in.); diameter: 21.6 cm. (8 1/2 in.)  
Iran, Seljuk period, early 13th century

A great number of early thirteenth-century underglaze-painted wares reveals radiating bands filled with inscriptions and floral motifs, some of which, as this example, employ a turquoise-blue glaze over the blue and black motifs. The inscription bands, written in reserve, form a cross which intersects at the center while the triangular panels between its arms are adorned with elegantly twisting willow-sprays.

The profile and the decoration of the outer walls of these blue-and-black painted wares employing radiating panels are almost identical: the straight sides widening at the rim meet the foot in an angle; alternating branches with double or single symmetrically curving leaves fill the exterior walls.

The cursive inscription is in Persian but has not yet been deciphered. Since each of the bands ends with a word possessing a similar sound, four lines from a poem must have been employed.

There exist several turquoise-blue glazed bowls which alternate four panels of willow-sprays with four bands of inscriptions radiating from the center (*Islamic Pottery*, no. 161; Pope, *Survey*, pl. 737B).

The dated examples of this type fall between 1204 and 1215 (Pope, *Survey*, pp. 1688 and 1689) and their Kashan origin has been demonstrated by Richard Ettinghausen ("Evidence," pp. 62-70) and by the wasters found at that site (Pope, "New Findings," figs. 10 and 11).





- 56\*** *Bowl with straight sides widening at rim, high foot* 65.28  
Paste: off-white  
Glaze: transparent  
Decoration: underglaze painted in blue and black  
Height: 10.2 cm. (4 in.); diameter: 21.5 cm. (8 1/2 in.)  
Iran, Seljuk, period, early 13th century

Belonging to the same type as the previous piece, this bowl is one of the most refined examples of its type. It is decorated with six bands of inscriptions which radiate from the center. Each of the larger panels between these bands possesses a floral motif composed of three rounded blossoms and an elongated leaf connected by thin curving leaves and strokes; minutely executed corner spandrels enclose the panels.

The exterior reveals willow-sprays; units with two curving leaves alternate with those that are doubled. Although this piece is said to have been found in Gurgan, the wasters from Kashan reveal similar radial patterns and floral motifs (see reference given in No. 55).

The inscription, like the one in the previous example, is from a Persian poem which has not been identified.

There exist several almost identical pieces, one of which is dated 1204-05 (Bahrami, pl. XXVIIIb; Mikami, vol. I, pl. 131; *Islamic Pottery*, no. 158; the dated example is published in Pope, *Survey*, pl. 734A).

The Freer bowl is in impeccable condition: the piece is undamaged, and its pigments and glaze are remarkably well preserved.





57\* *Plate with flattened rim and low foot* 41.12

Paste: buff

Glaze: opaque white

Decoration: overglaze painted in golden luster

Height: 7.0 cm. (2 3/4 in.); diameter: 38.3 cm. (15 1/8 in.)

Egypt, Fatimid period, 12th century

In the center of the plate a beardless figure, wearing a striped turban and ornate garments, rides a horse while a large hawk perches on his wrist. A wide contour panel surrounds the main theme while dots and "peacock's-eye" motifs fill in the background.

The flattened rim has a *kufic* inscription in Arabic, enclosed by a scalloped band. As the rim has undergone restoration, modern parts of the inscription are omitted in the following interpretation of the reading:

بركة كاملة ونعمة شاملة واقبال وسعادة  
وسلامة وس... وعافية وغبطة شاملة  
لصاحبه خلصنه من شر

Perfect blessing and complete favor and prosperity and happiness and safety and . . . good health and complete joy to the owner, may he be saved from evil.

The reverse of the plate has four large concentric circles with strokes added to the central portions as well as to the areas around them. On the base there appears another inscription, the first part of which has been read as: *بمصر*, or "in Misr" (that is, in Egypt, Cairo, or Fustat) followed by *ع*. The latter, found on other bowls from Egypt, has been interpreted in the past either as "I have succeeded or achieved" or "well done or made." (G. Wiet, "Deux Pièces de Céramique Égyptienne," *Ars Islamica*, vol. III, [1936], p. 178 and fig. 2; A. B. Bahgat and F. Massoul, *La Céramique Musulmane de l'Égypte*, Cairo, 1930, p. 22 and pl. A-6). Another contemporary bowl is signed "the work of Ibrahim . . . in Misr" (Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery*, pl. 22A).

This piece belongs to a group of Egyptian luster pottery usually called "Fustat ware" due to numerous fragments discovered at that site. This type of ware is generally decorated with floral, geometric and animal motifs and intact pieces portraying human figures are relatively rare.

This plate reveals the vestiges of the Samarra style with the employment of contour panels, "peacock's-eye" motifs and the particular decoration of the exterior with concentric circles and strokes. The object was said to have been found in Fustat.







**58\*** *Bowl with flaring sides, straight rim and low foot* 46.30  
Paste: buff  
Glaze: opaque white  
Decoration: overglaze painted in golden and reddish luster  
Height: 6.7 cm. (2 5/8 in.); diameter: 26.1 cm. (10 5/16 in.)  
Egypt, Fatimid period, 12th century

The bowl represents a dancing girl who bends one knee up while the other touches the floor, and holds long scarves in her hands. On either side of the figure are large single-handled jars decorated with pearl-bands. The dancer and the jars are enclosed by white contour panels and the background is filled with sketchily drawn "peacock's-eye" motifs. A thick band decorates the rim with a thin line on the inner side. The exterior reveals irregular diagonal strokes.

The inner surface of the bowl is painted in golden luster while the outer has a reddish color. A small green spot of oxidized copper appears on the stomach of the dancer.

The theme of a dancer is rather common in Fatimid art. An almost complete bowl in Berlin is identical to the Freer piece, and depicts a dancer flanked by similar vases (*Museum für Islamische Kunst: Katalog*, no. 276). Aside from the other luster-painted pieces, all of which are fragmentary (Bahgat and Massoul, pls. XVIII-4 and XXVI-6), dancers appear on ivory carvings, woodwork and on wall paintings (Ettinghausen, "Painting in the Fatimid Period," fig. 2). In most of these examples, the posture of the figure is more or less the same with her head turned back, knees bent and arms swinging. This dance step and the use of scarves seem to be traditional features of Fatimid entertainment. The inclusion of jars on the Freer bowl stresses the festive quality of the theme, suggesting merriment with the use of spirits.

Dancers with scarves and wine bottles were also found on the wall paintings of Samarra (Herzfeld, pl. II). The circles with dots and contour panels around the main motifs are characteristics of the Abbasid wares. These features indicate that the prototypes for some of the themes on Egyptian lusterwares can be traced to the Abbasid period (see Nos. 3 and 4).





- 59\*** *Bowl with flaring sides, straight rim and low foot* 66.26  
Paste: buff  
Glaze: opaque greenish-white  
Decoration: overglaze painted in reddish luster  
Height: 6.3 cm. (2 1/2 in.); diameter: 21.3 cm. (8 3/8 in.)  
Egypt, Fatimid period, 11th-12th century

A great number of Fatimid lusterwares was decorated with floral motifs as exemplified by this bowl. In each of the petals of the central quatrefoil is a trilobed leaf with floral arabesques sprinkled between the petals. A plain band encircles the inner and outer edge of the rim. The greenish-white glaze partially covers the exterior with the lower portion and the foot left unglazed.

The quatrefoil or cross formation, which appears on some Fatimid lusters, is most often a decorative element used in conjunction with other motifs and rarely the main theme as seen on this bowl. The trilobed leaf consisting of two rounded units flanking a tall and pointed section is far more common in the decorative repertoire of Egyptian luster-painted ceramics.

The precise dating of Fatimid lusterwares is problematical as only two dated pieces have come to light, both of which were made during the reign of al-Hakim (996-1021). From this period we also possess several inscribed examples which give the names of the makers such as Ghaban, Ibrahim, Sa'd and Muslim (for the latter artist see M. Jenkins, "Muslim").





- 60\* *Bowl with flaring sides, straight rim and low foot* 36.2  
Paste: buff  
Glaze: opaque greenish-white  
Decoration: overglaze painted in reddish luster  
Height: 8.9 cm. (3 1/2 in.); diameter: 21.0 cm. (8 1/4 in.)  
Egypt, Fatimid period, 12th century

The unusual decoration of this bowl consists of intersecting bands which divide the field into four parts. These bands, as well as the central motif and the units filling the four sections of the walls contain *kufic* inscriptions, intermingled with arabesques. Similar to the previous example, a band encircles both the inner and outer edges of the rim. Another inscription, how quite faded, appears on the outer walls.

The inscriptions found in the bands of the interior are interpreted as repeating the words *الذلة*, or "pleasure" and "wealth." The same word *السعادة*, or "happiness," occurs in the center as well as in the four units on the inner walls and on the exterior.

The reddish luster has worn off on various portions of the bowl, leaving a golden stain.

The unique composition of this piece makes the determination of its date and provenance rather difficult. Similar ornamental *kufic* inscriptions are seen on a number of fragmentary examples from Egypt, dated around the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Musée de l'Art Arabe du Caire, *La Céramique Égyptienne de l'Époque Musulmane*, Cairo, 1922, pls. 18-22; Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery*, pl. 22B). Until more data is available, it is suggested that the Freer bowl was made in Egypt during the latter years of the Fatimid rule.





- 61** *Star-shaped lamp* 31.7  
Paste: buff  
Glaze: turquoise-blue  
Decoration: molded  
Height: 7.0 cm. (2 3/4 in.); diameter: 19.5 cm. (7 11/16 in.)  
Syria, Ayyubid period, 12th-13th century

The oil lamp is shaped as a six-pointed star with an opening on the tip of each point; in the center there is a raised socket surrounded by six other holes. Each of the openings on the projected tips is made to resemble the mouth of a lion with its head molded in relief. The object stands on six legs conceived as lion's paws.

Arabesques adorn the upper portion of the lamp and parallel lines in relief encircle the sides. The turquoise-blue glaze is iridescent and partially conceals the decoration.

Turquoise or blue glazed molded and carved lamps, attributed to the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, are generally assigned to Rakka.

Rakka was the most prolific pottery center in Syria during the Ayyubid period and produced a wealth of underglaze-painted wares as well as monochrome molded or carved pottery until its destruction by the Mongols in 1259. It has been suggested that both Damascus and Rusafa executed wares reflecting similar styles. Among the carved and molded Rakka pieces are exceptionally handsome tabourets as well as utilitarian oil lamps.





- 62\*** *Bowl with flaring sides, flattened rim and low foot* 42.13  
Paste: reddish  
Glaze: green, yellow and purple  
Decoration: incised through white engobe  
Height: 7.6 cm. (3 in.); diameter: 28.3 cm. (11 1/8 in.)  
Syria, Ayyubid period, late 12th-early 13th century

A long-tailed bird, surrounded by foliage, stands in the center of the bowl. The cavetto is unadorned and the rim bears a chevron design composed of leaves. The exterior is partially unglazed.

The sgraffiato technique, popularly employed in Iran during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, was also used on contemporary Syrian and Egyptian bowls as exemplified by this piece. One bowl, found in Aleppo, establishes the Syrian provenance of these wares (Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery*, pl. 35 A and B).

The Syrian sgraffiato wares were executed in the same manner as the Iranian examples: a white engobe covers the reddish paste; the design was incised and green, yellow and purple glazes were applied to the designated areas while a transparent glaze was placed over the engobe which forms the background. The themes employed are also similar to those found on Iranian wares, often representing single animals placed against a floral arabesque scroll (see Nos. 18 and 19). In the Syrian wares the glazes tend to run and are not confined to the incised areas as seen in this example.

The sgraffiato technique was continued in Syria and Egypt during the Mamluk period. The shapes of the Mamluk wares were often inspired by contemporary metalwork; they were generally decorated with inscriptions and the blazons of the reigning families; and their glazes were restricted to brown, green and yellow.







63

*Bowl with flaring sides, flattened rim and low foot*

42.5

Paste: off-white

Glaze: transparent greenish-white

Decoration: underglaze painted in blue and turquoise; overglaze painted in brownish-red luster

Height: 7.5 cm. (3 in.); diameter: 25.9 cm. (10 3/16 in.)

Syria, Ayyubid period, late 12th-early 13th century

A great number of wares executed in Rakka was underglaze painted in blue or turquoise with overglaze brownish-red luster, and adorned with arabesques and inscriptions as seen in this example. The decorative program of the bowl consists of concentric bands centered around a roundel composed of radiating petals and leaves. The widest band on the walls alternates units of inscriptions and arabesques, separated by four medallions containing trilobed leaves. Two narrow friezes, also decorated with trilobed leaves, encircle either side of this band. The flattened rim shows a loosely executed scroll, inspired by calligraphy, set within solid bands.

The exterior reveals a frieze containing sketchily drawn spirals.

One of the two units with inscriptions on the interior is partially obliterated by iridescence with only a few letters visible. The inscription in the other panel reads:



Worthy of (it).

This type of ware was found in abundance in Rakka and is characterized by a thick and green tinged transparent glaze which crackles and gathers into large pools at the bottom of the piece. The shapes reveal a great amount of experimentation with a wide variety of jars, basins, vases, bowls and jugs.





64

*Jar with rounded small lip and low spreading foot* 08.138

Paste: off-white

Glaze: transparent greenish-white outside; green inside

Decoration: underglaze painted in blue; overglaze painted in brownish-red luster

Height: 19.1 cm. (7 1/2 in.); diameter: 27.7 cm. (10 15/16 in.)

Syria, Ayyubid period, late 12th-early 13th century

This almost spherical jar, belonging to the same group of Rakka wares as Number 63, is underglaze painted in blue and overglaze painted in brownish-red luster. It is decorated with four horizontal bands of inscriptions and arabesques which are outlined in thin blue lines. The first of these zones, at the lip, is painted in solid luster; it is followed by a braided band and a wide panel which contains inscriptions intercepted by seven medallions; the lowest portion is plain with an irregularly applied brownish-red luster band.

In each of the seven units of the wide panel on the body is a *kufic* inscription, enclosed by a contour panel and set against a background filled with spirals. The script is highly ornamental and could be rendered as: *سعادة*, or "happiness." The fact that the same word is repeated seven times adds a touch of mysticism to its meaning.

The inside of the lip of the jar shows a green glaze which is haphazardly applied and does not extend to the entire inner surface.





65

*Basin with straight sides, flat base and two molded handles*

08.148

Paste: off-white

Glaze: transparent greenish-white

Decoration: underglaze painted in blue; overglaze painted in brownish-red luster

Height: 10.5 cm. (4 1/8 in.); diameter: 28.0 cm. (11 in.)

Syria, Ayyubid period, late 12th-early 13th century

The basin has a large floral arabesque composition in the center. It is enclosed by two bands, the inner of which contains a simulated cursive writing and the outer is composed of trilobed leaves. A highly ornate *kufic* inscription, framed by two blue lines, appears on the walls with spirals filling its background.

The exterior is divided into vertical panels by blue and brownish-red luster strokes, filled with spirals and simulated inscriptions. Two handles molded in relief are attached to the outer walls.

The shape of this piece, as well as its mock handles and the inscription panel with a spiral ground, suggest that its model was a metal basin. There exist a number of Ayyubid brass basins with similar shapes; however, very few pieces have been executed in pottery.

The *kufic* inscription on the inner walls could be interpreted as: *سعادة*, or "happiness." It is repeated twelve times and possibly contains a mystical or magical significance.

The bands with simulated inscription, trilobed leaves, the character of the arabesques and employment of spirals in the backgrounds also appear in Numbers 63 and 64, indicating that all three pieces belong to the same period.





**66** *Jug with single handle, high neck and high foot* 08.140

Paste: off-white

Glaze: transparent greenish-white

Decoration: underglaze painted in blue; overglaze painted in brownish-red luster

Height: 19.5 cm. (7 11/16 in.); diameter: 13.2 cm. (5 3/16 in.)

Syria, Ayyubid period, late 12th-early 13th century

The high neck of the jug contains a single word written in *kufic* script: *سعادة*, or “happiness,” which is repeated three times and set against a spiral ground. There is a band of simulated cursive inscription on the shoulder. The wide panel on the body consisting of a large floral arabesque scroll also uses spirals in its background. The high foot is unadorned.

Thin blue lines appear on three areas: on the neck, the shoulder and above the foot. There are two small blue floral motifs on the handle.

Belonging to the same type, and possibly made in the same workshop as Numbers 63-65, this jug is slightly more refined than the previous examples. The paste is whiter and the glaze more carefully applied. All these pieces were obviously made for popular consumption and should be regarded as utilitarian household objects with attractive decorations and messages.





**67** *Vase with shallow neck, rounded lip and flat base* 08.141

Paste: off-white

Glaze: transparent greenish-white

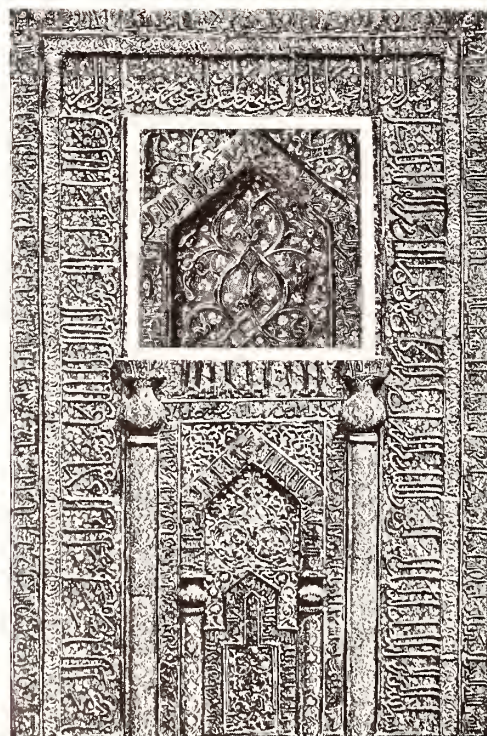
Decoration: underglaze painted in blue; overglaze painted in brownish-red luster

Height: 16.2 cm. (6 3/8 in.); diameter: 12.4 cm. (4 7/8 in.)

Syria, Ayyubid period, late 12th-early 13th century

The simplified decorative program of this vase consists of bands of solid luster alternating with those containing simulated cursive inscriptions. Only the wide zone on the body possesses a legible message. This zone, broken by blue and luster-painted medallions into four units, seems to repeat the phrase: *سعادة له*, or “happiness to him,” in each unit. The addition of extra strokes and ornamentation between some of the letters make the inscription very difficult to decipher.

Like most of the Rakka pieces of this group, the reading of the inscriptions is highly hypothetical. Either the potters preferred to add extra strokes and curves in order to compose those units in a more appealing manner, or they intentionally tried to make a puzzle out of the wordings. Since most of the inscriptions bestow good wishes, often “happiness,” they were comprehensible to the beholder and the artistic liberties taken by the potters did not conceal their essential message. The significance of the repetition of some of the words and the addition of the extra letters are possibly lost to us, but they may have had symbolic meanings in their own period (for a study of this problem see D. Aanavi, “Devotional Writing: ‘Pseudoinscriptions’ in Islamic Art,” *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, vol. XXVI, no. 9 [May, 1968], pp. 352-58).



RECONSTRUCTION



68\* *Rectangular tile* 09.319

Paste: off-white

Glaze: opaque white

Decoration: in relief; underglaze painted in turquoise and blue; overglaze painted in brownish-gold luster

Height: 66.0 cm. (26 in.); width: 57.5 cm. (22 5/8 in.)

Iran, Ilkhanid period, early 14th century

The workshops of Kashan, which excelled in the production of luster-painted tiles and mihrabs, continued their activities in the fourteenth century as observed in this example. The Freer tile, the upper panel of a mihrab (see reconstruction), has a central recessed portion adorned with a bold arabesque executed in relief. The background of this portion is filled with spirals, blossoms and branches which are luster-painted in reserve. A similar composition appears on the two corner spandrels of the tile. The wide band of raised inscription, encircling the recessed gable, also employs an identical background. The inscription is from the Koran (11:116):

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ طَرَفَيْ النَّهَارِ وَزُلْفًا مِنْ  
اللَّيْلِ إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Perform prayer morning and evening, and in the watches of the night. Behold good works drive away evils.

The vestiges of the monumental style of Kashan luster tiles can be seen in the reserved luster-painting technique; in the background filled with spirals, leaves and flowers; and in the braided band on the inner side of the inscription (Ettinghausen, "Evidence," p. 62, fig. 23).

The physical format of the Seljuk mihrabs seems to have been employed in the Ilkhanid period. In the reconstruction of the Freer tile the spectacular example made by al-Hasan ibn Arabshah was used (Pope, *Survey*, pl. 704). This mihrab was made in Kashan in 1226 and epitomizes the Seljuk luster-painted tiles.







- 69\* *Large bowl with flaring sides, everted rim and low foot* 09.111  
 Paste: off-white  
 Glaze: opaque white  
 Decoration: overglaze painted in golden luster  
 Height: 11.6 cm. (4 9/16 in.); diameter: 47.5 cm. (18 11/16 in.)  
 Iran, Ilkhanid period, late 13th-early 14th century

The continuation of the Seljuk luster-painting style into the Ilkhanid period is exemplified by this large bowl. Painted in reserve, it represents four figures seated by a pool filled with swimming fish; a central tree with large blossoms and leaves divides the group into two units; additional flowers and branches appear on the banks of the pool and behind the figures.

With the exception of the haloes of the figures, the entire surface is covered with patterns: spirals, dots and circles appear in the background, in the water and on the garments of the personages. The textile motifs with birds, large split-leaves and roundels with dots had been observed in early thirteenth-century pieces. The pool in the exergue with overlapping waves on its shore, the braided band encircling the central composition and the scalloped border on the rim are also found in Seljuk wares.

The inscription on the rim is from a Persian poem:

ای کر سینه مهر تو سیران جهان  
 ترسان و فراق تو دلیران جهان  
 با چشم تو اهووان چه دارند بدشت  
 ای زلف تو بای بند شیران جهان

Oh you, the satisfied with the world yearn for your friendship

The world's heroes dread separation from you

As long as your eyes shine, of what have the desert antelopes to boast

The world's lions are snared in your lair.

According to Mehdi Bahrani, who has translated the text, the same poem occurs on a fragmentary bowl dated 1216 as well as on three thirteenth-century vessels; it is also employed on a tile in Berlin dated 1337. Therefore, these verses were the potters' stock-in-trade for over one hundred years (Bahrani, pp. 120-122).

The exterior of the bowl shows a series of medallions which enclose quatrefoils containing three-petaled blossoms. The luster on the outer walls is slightly brownish-gold in comparison to the paler tone on the interior surface.

Due to stylistic resemblance to the products of Kashan, this piece is attributed to that city (Pope, *Survey*, pl. 715).

The bowl warped during its firing and there is a noticeable crack on the rim.





**70\*** *Bowl with flaring sides, flattened rim and low foot* 47·9

Paste: off-white

Glaze: transparent

Decoration: underglaze painted in white slip on gray engobe; outlined in black with a few blue spots

Height: 14.8 cm. (5 13/16 in.); diameter: 27.0 cm. (10 5/8 in.)

Iran, Ilkhanid period, late 13th-early 14th century

In the center of this deep bowl a gazelle runs through a densely foliated background while a pearl-band adorns the rim. On the exterior there is a border composed of vertical strokes (possibly calligraphic *lams* and occasional *alifs*); the outer walls of the bowl are decorated with radiating lines. The foot and lower portion of the exterior are unglazed.

The technique of decoration exemplifies a group of Ilkhanid wares which is attributed to Sultanabad (Pope, *Survey*, pl. 779B). A gray engobe is spread on the inner and outer surfaces of the bowl, stopping just above the foot on the exterior. The decoration, painted in a white slip, is thickly applied and appears in low relief; black is used for the outlines of the motifs and in the details; and the bowl is covered by a transparent glaze. Underglaze-blue spots appear on the large blossom in the background as well as on the neck, tail, body and forelegs of the gazelle. The rounded leaves with a single stroke in the center, dots adorning the body of the animal and the voids of the background as well as the pearl-border on the rim are characteristic of this group of wares.

These provincial slip-painted bowls have a distinctive profile with a wide rim overhanging both the exterior and interior, straight upper collar and tapering high walls.

Two inscribed bowls in the Victoria and Albert Museum provide an approximate dating for this piece: a luster-painted bowl with a running spotted animal in the center is dated 1268; another example found in Sultanabad, reveals the same shape and bears the date 1278 (Pope, *Survey*, pl. 774A; *The Kelekian Collection of Persian and Analogous Potteries*, Paris, 1910, pl. 72). Similar gazelles occur in the paintings of a manuscript which describes the usefulness of animals, the *Manafi al-Hayawan*, dated 1291 (Pierpont Morgan Library, New York). The Freer bowl, most likely executed around the turn of the fourteenth century, reveals that the Seljuk interest in bestiary persisted into the Ilkhanid period.





**71** *Plate with flattened rim and low foot* 09.74

Paste: off-white

Glaze: transparent

Decoration: underglaze painted in blue, green and purple

Height: 5.9 cm. (2 5/16 in.); diameter: 21.9 cm. (8 5/8 in.)

Iran, Ilkhanid period, late 13th-early 14th century

The center of the plate is decorated with concentric bands in the middle of which is a rosette set off by a plain zone. This zone is encircled by a band of Arabic inscription written in reserve. The inscription, used on Iranian pottery for over a hundred years, reads:

العزّ الدائم والإقبال الزائد والنصر الغالب والرأي  
الثاقب والعزة القائم والذولة البقاء لصاحبه

Power eternal and prosperity superabundant and victory triumphant and insight penetrating and power enduring and dominion everlasting to the owner.

The cavetto of the plate is fluted and the rim is decorated with a series of ogival petals. Parts of the design on the rim are covered by iridescence. The exterior is simply decorated with tiny blossoms sprinkled on the cavetto and two lines which encircle the rim and the foot.

Wares with similar central rosettes, inscription bands and rim patterns are characteristic of the Sultanabad region. An example employing an identical script, but representing confronting peacocks, bears the date 1276 (Lane, *Islamic Pottery*, pl. 94; and Pope, *Survey*, pl. 781A), while other comparable pieces are assigned to the early part of the fourteenth century.





**72** *Small bowl with flaring sides, straight rim and low foot* 09.132  
Paste: off-white  
Glaze: transparent  
Decoration: underglaze painted in blue, black and turquoise  
Height: 5.9 cm. (2 5/16 in.); diameter: 12.2 cm. (4 13/16 in.)  
Iran, Ilkhanid period, late 13th century

This small bowl has a central medallion in which a spotted gazelle runs through leaves and blossoms. The interior walls are fluted, like the previous example, and a thin line designates the rim. The exterior is unadorned and, due to the disintegration of the glaze, highly iridescent.

The style of the animal and the flora suggest the late Kashan works (see No. 34). Yet this bowl is executed in a more carefree and sketchy manner. The subject is close to the one seen in Number 70. Similar bowls or cups with running animals in the center are assigned to Sultanabad (*Islamic Pottery*, pl. 165; Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery*, pls. 95B and 96A).

Single animals incorporated with floral motifs were frequently used both on pottery and on tiles during the Ilkhanid period. Some pieces were underglaze-painted, as this example, while others either used the slip-painted technique described in Number 70, or were luster-painted. This preoccupation with animals, representing decorative or symbolic, real or fantastic creatures, can be traced to the formative years of Islamic art and continued throughout its history.





**73** *Small bowl with flaring sides, straight rim and low foot* 08.161

Paste: off-white

Glaze: opaque white

Decoration: underglaze painted in blue and turquoise; overglaze painted in brownish-red luster

Height: 6.2 cm. (2 7/16 in.); diameter: 13.0 cm. (5 1/8 in.)

Iran, Ilkhanid period, late 13th century

A particular group of Ilkhanid wares, executed in the latter part of the thirteenth century, is underglaze painted in blue with overglaze luster decorations. This small bowl continues the radial pattern seen in the earlier Kashan pieces, alternating four panels containing inscriptions with those filled with arabesques (Nos. 55 and 56). The rim of the bowl and the outlines of the luster-painted panels are rendered in blue; turquoise is added to four of these lines, forming a cross-pattern. The *kufic* inscriptions, painted in reserve, are extremely ornamental and may be read as: *سعد*, or "happiness," with the letters forming elongated leaves and branches.

The exterior is composed of twenty-two petals in which cursive inscriptions alternate with branches bearing symmetrical leaves. Blue bands encircle the rim and foot; four of the petals are outlined in turquoise, forming a cross which duplicates the interior theme.

The Arabic inscription in the outer petals is repeated eleven times and reads:

توكلت على الله

I have trust in God.

Identically shaped and decorated bowls are in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford (Allan, *Medieval Middle Eastern Pottery*, pl. 32) and in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (Pope, *Survey*, pl. 775A). This type has been studied by Richard Ettinghausen ("New Affiliations for a Classical Persian Pottery Type," *Parnassus*, vol. VIII, no. 3 [March, 1936], pp. 10-12, fig. 1b).







**74\*** *Bowl with flaring sides, everted rim and low foot* 09.317

Paste: off-white

Glaze: opaque white

Decoration: underglaze painted in blue; overglaze painted in brownish-red luster

Height: 7.3 cm. (2 7/8 in.); diameter: 31.3 cm. (12 5/16 in.)

Iran, Ilkhanid period, dated 1277

Similar in technique to the previous bowl, this piece is decorated with three concentric bands which are painted in overglaze brownish-red luster while a simple blue band encircles the rim. The central portion has seven blossoms, interspersed with arabesques, radiating from a rosette. The petals of the blossoms are filled with dotted circles while hatched lines appear in the outer leaves of the rosette. Diminutive dots adorn the voids around the floral motif and the arabesques.

A thin band of overlapping petals encloses the central medallion and a border of cursive inscription is placed on the rim. The inscription is illegible except for the date 676, which is rendered in numerals. It is highly probable that the inscription was meant to express the usual wishes as seen in Numbers 71 and 77.

The exterior has a simulated band of inscriptions on the rim, followed by a panel of eleven medallions filled with circles, spirals and dots.

Even though the aesthetic appeal of this bowl is not outstanding, the inclusion of the date in the inscription makes it of considerable importance. According to the dealer, it was discovered at Karaghan, which is on the border of the Sultanabad region. The piece is grouped with certain wares from this site due to its stylistic peculiarities (R. Ettinghausen, "Dated Ceramics in Some American Museums," *Bulletin of the American Institute of Art and Archaeology*, vol. IV, no. 4 [Dec., 1936], pp. 223, fig. 6).





**75** *Bowl with flaring sides, straight rim and low foot* 09.316

Paste: off-white

Glaze: transparent

Decoration: underglaze painted in blue and green; overglaze painted in red, dark-green, white and gold

Height: 8.3 cm. (3 5/16 in.); diameter: 17.7 cm. (7 in.)

Iran, Ilkhanid period, late 13th century

The decoration on this bowl consists of eight radiating panels in which two designs alternate. The motifs are underglaze painted in blue and green with red, white, and an almost black dark-green applied over the glaze; the composition is further enhanced by the addition of gold leaf. Some of the overglaze colors overlap and camouflage the underglaze motifs.

The exterior is broken into narrow petals, filled with blossoms and diamonds. The employment of a radial pattern in the interior and petals on the exterior is similar of the composition of another contemporary piece, executed in a different technique (No. 73). The cross-pattern is also reminiscent of early thirteenth-century Kashan bowls (Nos. 55 and 56).

This example characterizes a particular group of wares, assigned to the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century and often attributed to the Sultanabad region. The overglaze motifs are painted in red, black and white; and are enhanced with the addition of gold leaf. White pigment is generally used in the braided bands surrounding the panels, black in the outlines of the motifs and in the scrolls, and gold leaf is applied in diamond-shaped units. Radial patterns are the most common compositional schemes of these bowls (Pope, *Survey*, pl. 752B; Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery*, pl. 75A; Pinder-Wilson, pl. 33).

This group is termed *lajvardina* ware (*lajvard* meaning blue) and includes tiles and pottery executed in the manner described above, often using a blue or turquoise ground. Like *minai* wares, this group is also fired twice, the second firing at a lower temperature affixing the overglaze colors (Ettinghausen, "New Affiliations," pp. 10-11, figs. 1 and 2).





**76\*** *Sweetmeat Dish* 09.318

Paste: off-white

Glaze: opaque turquoise-blue

Decoration: overglaze painted in red, black and white with touches of gold

Height: 11.6 cm. (4 9/16 in.); diameter: 34.7 cm. (13 11/16 in.)

Iran, Ilkhanid period, early 14th century

This example is executed in an almost identical technique as the bowl described in Number 75, but it employs an opaque turquoise-blue glaze under the red, black and white pigments. The surface gilding has virtually disappeared due to use and erosion, a feature commonly observed in this type of ware.

The shape of the piece is rather exceptional with seven concavities on the top, thought to be for delicacies or sweetmeats. The container is constructed in two parts with a bowl-shaped body and a flat upper surface joined together at the rim, leaving the interior hollow. The scoops on the surface are decorated with ogival medallions and arabesques; roundels, spirals and dots adorn the areas around the concavities and the upper band on the sides. The walls have unadorned petals rising from the heavy foot.

Only two identical condiment containers have been published. The first is about the same size as the Freer dish with seven concavities (32.7 cm.); this example, luster-painted with figures and rosettes, is dated early thirteenth-century and attributed to Rayy. It is owned by the Nelson Gallery in Kansas City (L. H. Cooper, "Genius and Invention: Artists and Artisans of Iran," *Apollo*, vol. XCVII, no. 133 [March, 1973], pl. 9).

The second example, belonging to the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, is glazed in blue, painted in red and white enamels and gilded. Although it is slightly smaller than the Freer piece (28.5 cm.), the character of the decoration is almost identical, and both pieces were probably executed about the same time (*Islamic Pottery*, no. 141). The Freer dish shows considerably more wear than the above, particularly on the upper surfaces.





77

*Large jar with shallow neck, everted lip and flat base*

08.198

Paste: buff

Glaze: dark-blue

Decoration: molded

Height: 50.2 cm. (19 3/4 in.); diameter: 40.4 cm. (15 7/8 in.)

Iran, Ilkhanid period, dated 1284-85

The neck of the large jar has a floral scroll consisting of blossoms intermingled with leaves. The shoulder possesses a rather stiffly written cursive Arabic inscription which gives the date in numerals:

العز الدائم الإقبال الزايد النصر الغالب ... القايم الرأي  
الثاقب البقاء ... لصاحبه في سنة ٦٨٣

Power eternal, prosperity superabundant, victory triumphant . . . enduring, insight penetrating, perpetuity to the owner in the year 683.

The band on the body shows a series of animals, which resemble gazelles, running in counterclockwise direction through a thickly foliated ground. The zone above the base has a series of petals separated by vertical stems which terminate in roundels (published in Pope, *Survey*, pl. 760).

The animals and floral motifs recall those decorating the bowls described in Numbers 70 and 72; the character of the inscription as well as its wording are similar to that in Number 71 and the rendering of the date in numerals was also observed in a contemporary piece (No. 74). These features must have been common to the repertoire of the Ilkhanid potters during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.

A comparable jar, also molded and glazed in blue, is owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Pope, *Survey*, pl. 759). This jar bears the date 681 (1282-83). The fact that the Metropolitan jar has a similar panel with inscriptions on the shoulder, animals running through foliage on the body and vertical bands above the flat base, suggests that both pieces were made in the same region, most likely in the same workshop.



RECONSTRUCTION



78 *Large vase* 03.206

Paste: buff

Glaze: opaque white

Decoration: overglaze painted in blue and golden luster; partially gilded

Height: 77.2 cm. (30 3/8 in.); diameter: 68.2 cm. (26 7/8 in.)

Spain, Nasrid period, late 14th-early 15th century

The large vase, whose neck and handles are missing, is decorated in three horizontal panels. Between the handles on the shoulder is a scene which is repeated on either side: two confronting gazelles flank a large and rounded arabesque tree. The animals on one side of the vase possess an Arabic inscription which reads:

العافية منزلتني تكبدي (من ابن الكندي)

The first portion is translated as "good health." The second inscription can be interpreted as: "from Ibn al-Kutandi" or "my position costs me a high price (my high station places me in the culminating point)."

The band of inscriptions below the handles has an Arabic poem which was analysed by A. R. Nykl ("The Inscription on the 'Freer Vase'," *Ars Orientalis*, vol. II [1957], pp. 496-497):

أيها الناظر الذي زانه رايق الدار  
انظر اليوم صورتي وتأمل ترخيري  
فكأني من فضة والباسي من الزهر  
سعدني بيدي الذي نال ملكي بمظله

O thou onlooker who art adorned with the splendor of  
the dwelling

Look at my shape today and contemplate: thou wilt see  
my excellence

For I seem to be made of silver and my clothing made of  
blossoms

My happiness lay in the hands of him who is my owner  
underneath the canopy.

Below the inscription are four large eight-pointed stars, alternately decorated with geometric motifs and with inscriptions. The stars with inscriptions appear below the handles and repeat the words "good health." Between the four large stars are smaller roundels filled with arabesques. Similar motifs appear above the flat base.

The bronze stand with four lions was designed by the former owner, Mariano Fortuny (1841-74), who used as his inspiration the animals in the famous Lion Court of the Alhambra Palace in Granada.

The Freer vase belongs to a unique series of luster-painted vases which were executed during the Nasrid period (A. Van de Put, "On a Missing Alhambra Vase and the Ornament of the Vase Series," *Archaeologia*, vol. XCII [1947], pp. 43-77; Frothingham, figs. 8-30; Ettinghausen, "Notes on the Lusterware of Spain," pls. 5, 6, 8 and 9).







**79\*** *Plate with flattened rim and low foot* 54.3

Paste: off-white

Glaze: transparent

Decoration: underglaze painted in blue

Height: 6.5 cm. (2 9/16 in.); diameter: 39.3 cm. (15 1/2 in.)

Turkey, Ottoman period, ca. 1500

The central medallion, painted in reserve, employs an intricate design composed of blossoms and leaves connected by interlacing and knotted branches. These elements evolve from an axial unit made up of crescent-shaped motifs. The motifs that are placed at the outer edges of the medallion are cut off by the border, suggesting the continuation of the design. Even though an overall arabesque is attempted, the symmetrical placement of the motifs and the stress on the axial unit provide a definite focus and direction to the composition.

The cavetto of the plate is left unadorned. On the rim there is a floral scroll which uses the same stylized blossoms and leaves seen in the central medallion and is also painted in reserve. An identical scroll adorns the exterior but is rendered in blue against the white ground.

This plate belongs to a limited group of blue-and-white wares executed in Iznik around the turn of the sixteenth century. The decoration utilizes blossoms, buds and leaves, at times mixed with crescents, stylized cloud-collars, palmettes and rosettes connected by curving thin stems which are usually knotted at the points of intersection. Painting in reserve and shading the motifs to give them a three-dimensional quality are characteristic features of this type of ware.

The early Ottoman pieces decorated in this style consist of a variety of shapes including plates, lamps, deep bowls and jugs. The closest comparable examples to the Freer plate are in London (the Victoria and Albert Museum, published in Lane, *Later Islamic Pottery*, London, 1971, pl. 28A) and in Paris (Musée des Arts Décoratifs, no. 8062). There also exist several other pieces in Turkish collections, two of which are in Bursa (Aslanapa, *Türkische Fliesen*, figs. 67 and 68, pls. 32 and 33) and a third in the Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul (no. 41.9). All these plates employ reserve painting in their central medallion and rim, leaving the cavetto unadorned.





**80** *Plate with flattened foliate rim and low foot* 70.2  
Paste: off-white  
Glaze: transparent  
Decoration: underglaze painted in blue  
Height: 8.0 cm. (3 1/8 in.); diameter: 39.4 cm. (15 1/2 in.)  
Turkey, Ottoman period, early 16th century

In contrast to the previous example, which employed an indigenous Turkish design, this plate reveals the strong impact of blue-and-white Ming wares. A foliate border encloses the central medallion which contains three bunches of grapes amidst scrolling vines, curving tendrils and large leaves. Thirteen floral sprays adorn the cavetto while a wave-pattern appears on the foliate rim. The exterior, following the decoration of the cavetto, reveals twelve floral sprays.

The influence of Chinese porcelains is a unique feature of early Turkish ceramics. The sultans were avid collectors of Far Eastern wares and the imperial kitchens in Istanbul began acquiring Chinese porcelains as early as the fifteenth century. Many of the examples housed in the Topkapi Palace are either Chinese celadons or blue-and-white export wares. A number of pieces of the latter group is decorated with the grape theme which served as the model for this plate.

In many of the Chinese examples identical motifs are employed in the three zones of the plates: three bunches of grapes appear in the center, floral sprays adorn the cavetto and the exterior, and the wave-pattern appears on the rim. In the Ming wares there is a rigid correlation between the number of points in the foliate rim and in the border around the central medallion as well as in the floral sprays of the cavetto and the exterior; in contrast the Turkish artist preferred to overlook this consistency.

The grape theme was extensively employed by the Iznik potters with over two dozen known plates in existence. Most of these examples use turquoise or green in their color scheme. The Freer plate is one of the extremely rare pieces painted only in blue-and-white. Its Iznik provenance is confirmed by a blue-and-white shard acquired at that site, decorated with a bunch of grapes (this fragment is in the study collection of the Freer Gallery).





**81** *Plate with flattened rim and low foot* 55.8

Paste: off-white

Glaze: transparent

Decoration: underglaze painted in two tones of blue

Height: 6.8 cm. (2 5/8 in.); diameter: 37.6 cm. (14 13/16 in.)

Turkey, Ottoman period, second quarter of the 16th century

The decorative organization of this plate, which employs three concentric zones, is very close to those discussed previously (Nos. 79 and 80). The central medallion represents three vases with single handles, filled with carnations, roses and tulips while additional flowers flank them. The vessel in the middle stands on a tabouret and both the vase and its stand are decorated with floral motifs. The central medallion is enclosed by a polylobed arch, adorned with two branches laden with blossoms which are painted in reserve.

The cavetto has eight tulip sprays. The same flower is repeated on the rim, alternating white and blue tulips, the latter enclosed by oval medallions. On the exterior is a floral scroll with blossoms and leaves, similar to the design seen in Number 79.

This plate belongs to a particular type of Iznik pottery painted in cobalt-blue and turquoise-blue (Lane, "Ottoman Pottery," fig. 39). It represents the transitional phase between the earlier blue-and-white wares and the ensuing type which incorporates sage-green and manganese-purple. The formal division of the plate with floral sprays in the cavetto as well as the character of the abstracted floral motifs in the arch of the central medallion and in the scroll on the exterior reveal the features of the earlier group. However, the naturalistic tendency in the representation of vases and the clearly identifiable flora such as tulips, carnations and roses forecast the most characteristic type of Ottoman wares which appear around the middle of the sixteenth century, the polychrome-painted pottery decorated with an abundance of floral motifs (see Nos. 84 and 85).





82 *Plate with straight rim and low foot* 63.7

Paste: off-white

Glaze: transparent

Decoration: underglaze painted in purple and two tones of blue

Height: 5.8 cm. (2 1/4 in.); diameter: 31.2 cm. (12 1/4 in.)

Turkey, Ottoman period, second quarter of the 16th century

The entire inner surface of the plate is covered by large floral motifs springing from a cluster of leaves placed at the bottom. Painted on a dark-blue ground, the asymmetrical composition consists of turquoise-blue roses, purple pomegranates and white hyacinths amidst branches filled with rounded leaves.

The exterior consists of twelve floral sprays: a pair of tulips alternates with stylized roses.

Belonging to a distinct type of Turkish pottery which is underglaze-painted in blue, green and purple, this example reveals three features which predominate the latter wares: the naturalistic representation of flowers, the insistence of a specific source from which the flora grow and the decoration of the exterior with alternating floral sprays.

The only dated specimen of this group is a mosque lamp commissioned in 1549 by Süleyman the Magnificent for the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem (in the British Museum, London; published in Lane, *Later Islamic Pottery*, pl. 38). This piece also states that it was made in Iznik by Muslu or Mustafa. The exceptional high quality of the lamp indicates that by that date Iznik was well established in the manufacture of this particular type of ware.

This group of Ottoman pottery is characterized by elegantly twisting leaves and delicately painted flowers, and reveals a highly refined sense of compositional harmony which is somewhat lacking in this example.







**83***Plate with straight rim and low foot* 70.25

Paste: off-white

Glaze: transparent

Decoration: underglaze painted in blue and green

Height: 5.9 cm. (2 3/8 in.); diameter: 32.5 cm. (12 3/4 in.)

Turkey, Ottoman period, late 16th century

The grape theme, inspired by Chinese examples in the beginning of the sixteenth century, persisted for approximately a hundred years in Ottoman ceramics. In this plate, the central medallion bears three bunches of grapes amidst leaves and vines while the wide cavetto shows a loosely drawn scroll with eight blossoms; the rim is adorned with a thin chevron band. The exterior repeats the scroll with eight blossoms seen on the cavetto and has a braided band on the rim.

The naturalistic execution observed on the early sixteenth-century examples has been lost, and the elements have become highly stylized and decorative (compare with No. 80). This transformation is particularly noticeable in the green spots which appear in the loops of the tendrils around the grapes with a complete disregard of the concept of full and void. At this stage, the grape motif had become a part of the artistic vocabulary of the Ottoman world and was adapted to its taste and whimsy.

There exists a considerable number of these plates, a few of which shows red or green grapes. Bunches of grapes also appear on contemporary Turkish tiles, often mixed with trees and flowers.





**84***Plate with flattened foliate rim and low foot* 69.25

Paste: off-white

Glaze: transparent

Decoration: underglaze painted in blue, green and red

Height: 6.4 cm. (2 1/2 in.); diameter: 31.7 cm. (12 1/2 in.)

Turkey, Ottoman period, mid-16th century

The symmetrical composition consists of a large lotus blossom in the center, flanked by elegantly twisting leaves, roses in full bloom, rose buds and bluebells, or hyacinths. The floral motifs grow from a source placed at the bottom of the plate.

The foliate rim reveals a wave-pattern, painted as a series of spirals and strokes. Although originally meant to represent rolling waves breaking against rocky shores in Chinese examples, in Ottoman wares this pattern becomes so highly stylized by the middle of the sixteenth century that its relationship to Far Eastern models is at times difficult to visualize.

The exterior decoration of the plate shows six blossoms alternating with double tulips, another standard decorative feature found in sixteenth-century Turkish pottery.

This plate exemplifies the polychrome Ottoman wares in which the clear white body forms the background for the bright blue, green and red motifs, the latter of which appears in low relief due to the thickness of the pigment. The use of this red is first recorded on the tiles of the Süleymaniye complex in Istanbul, built by the great architect Sinan in 1550. The tiles and pottery executed during the second half of the sixteenth and the early decades of the seventeenth century utilize this distinctive red pigment in conjunction with varying hues of blues and greens.

The red on this plate is slightly brownish in tone and has a tendency to congeal in spots instead of being evenly distributed. This imperfection in the painting as well as the appearance of the lotus blossom, which is more characteristic of the earlier wares, suggest that the Freer plate is one of the first attempts in the execution of polychrome wares. The drawing is also softer and more sinuous than seen in the later classical examples, revealing a closer affiliation with the earlier group.





- 85** *Plate with flattened foliate rim and low foot* 66.25  
Paste: off-white  
Glaze: transparent  
Decoration: underglaze painted in blue, green and red  
Height: 6.0 cm. (2 3/8 in.); diameter: 29.1 cm. (11 1/2 in.)  
Turkey, Ottoman period, mid-16th century

A typical example of polychrome Iznik pottery is represented by this plate which uses almost an identical composition as the previous object. Here a cypress tree forms the central axis with twisting leaves, roses and rosebuds placed at either side.

The foliate rim shows the standardized wave-pattern and the exterior reveals the same alternating blossoms and tulips described previously.

The colors are brilliantly rendered and the sparkling coral-red, emerald-green and intense blue are set off by the stark white ground. They are further enhanced by the bright and clear transparent glaze.

The jewel-like tones, careful execution and the pleasing composition of these wares have made them the most popular type of Turkish ceramics. They were exported to Europe and imitated in Italy and in England. Since a group had been found on the island of Rhodes, they were formerly attributed to that site and popularly called "Rhodian" wares. The Iznik excavations have proven that this group, as well as the earlier blue-and-white and the other type which employs greens and purples, were executed in the kilns of that city (for the reports on Iznik excavations see Aslanapa, *Türkische Fliesen*, and "Pottery and Kilns").





**86***Tankard with single handle, straight sides and flat base*

68.68

Paste: off-white

Glaze: transparent

Decoration: underglaze painted in green, red and three tones of blue

Height: 21.0 cm. (8 1/4 in.); diameter: 12.0 cm. (4 3/4 in.)

Turkey, Ottoman period, late 16th century

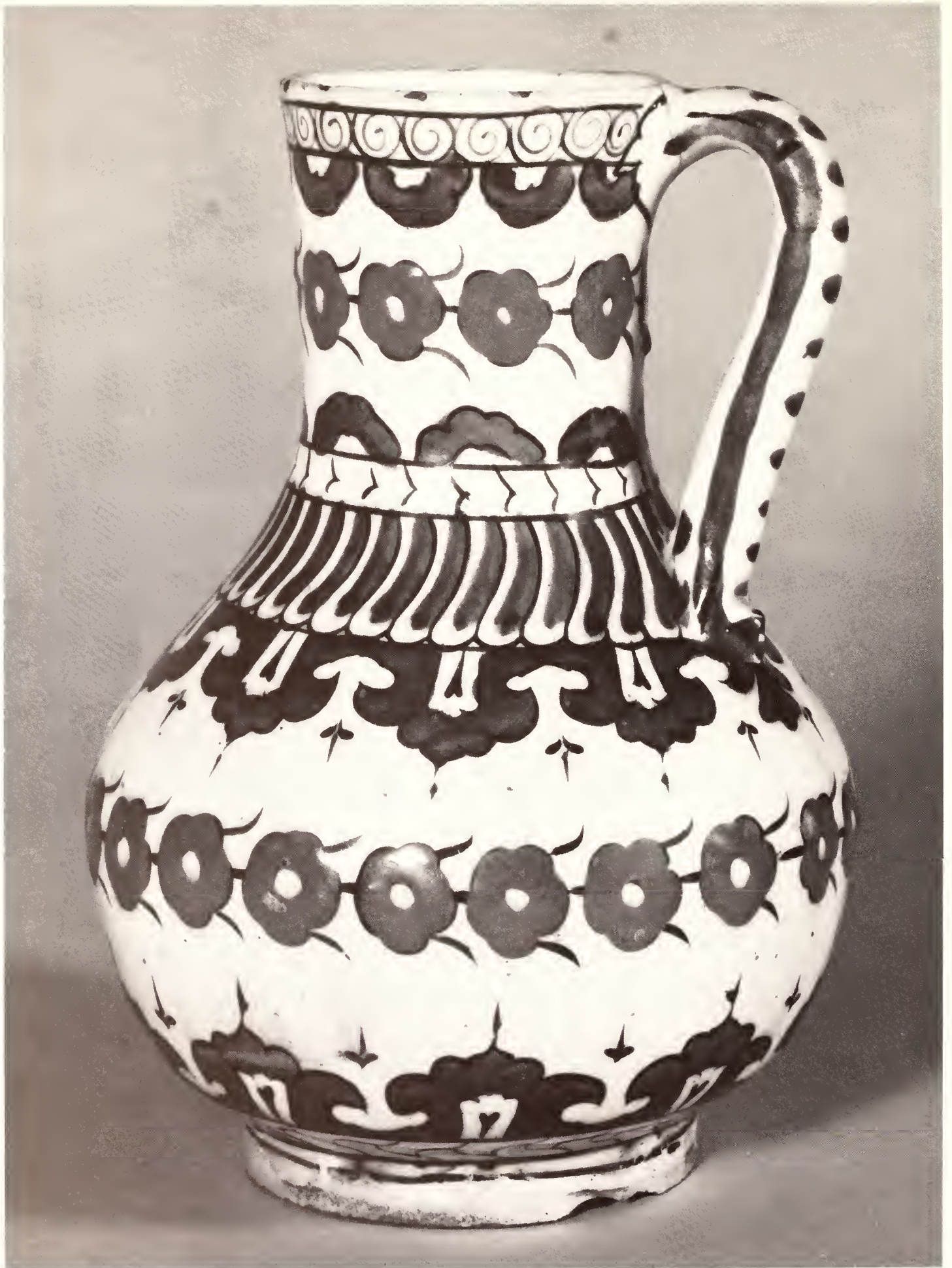
The unusual decoration of this tankard represents sailboats cruising around small islands. Each island possesses a tower, or castle, surrounded by thin and tall cypress trees. A large bird, which perches in the center of the islands, transforms the nautical scene into a somewhat fantastic setting. A chevron band adorned with dots encircles both the rim and foot whereas the angular handle is decorated with dots and leaves.

The islands on the rim are drawn upside-down, possibly to fill the space between the boats. Bold black lines outlining the curvature of the sails and the contours of the islands help to create a flowing movement which encircles the tankard in three uneven registers.

The cartographic depiction of the scene with few elements represented in bird's-eye view resembles the style of manuscript illustrations executed during the second quarter of the sixteenth century in which cities and ports were drawn in great detail.

The blues used on this piece range from a deep cobalt tone in the castles and birds, to a turquoise in the islands, and a paler hue, which is almost lavender, in the sails.

Although the most common shapes produced by the Iznik kilns were plates, tankards, as well as vases, ewers, jugs, bowls, cups and circular hanging ornaments were frequently executed in polychrome colors. Sailboats are also represented on plates and jugs which date from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (Lane, *Later Islamic Pottery*, pl. 46B; B. Rackham, *Islamic Pottery and Italian Maiolica*, London, 1959, pls. 90-93).





- 87** *Jug with single handle, high neck and low foot* 69.2  
Paste: off-white  
Glaze: transparent  
Decoration: underglaze painted in blue, green and red  
Height: 19.7 cm. (7 3/4 in.); diameter: 14.0 cm. (5 1/2 in.)  
Turkey, Ottoman period, late 16th-early 17th century

The neck of the jug shows three horizontal rows of boldly drawn blossoms, the upper and lower of which are cut off by the bands on the lip and shoulder. The band on the lip consists of spirals while the lower one shows an abstracted version of the braided motif. A series of overlapping petals adorns the shoulder.

The pear-shaped body also reveals a tripartite division with cinquefoil motifs above and below a row of blossoms which repeats the neck decoration. A pearl-band appears on the curving handle.

The brilliance of the colors and the refined drawing of the motifs degenerated towards the end of the sixteenth century. The colors lost their intensity and the decoration became derivative and unimaginative. Although the blue, green and red pigments on this jug are still vibrant, the monotonous repetition of the motifs and their coarse execution point to the beginning of the decline of the Iznik kilns.





Paste: off-white

Glaze: transparent

Decoration: underglaze painted in blue, green and red

Height: 26.0 cm. (10 1/4 in.); width: 24.0 cm. (9 1/2 in.)

Turkey, Ottoman period, early 17th century

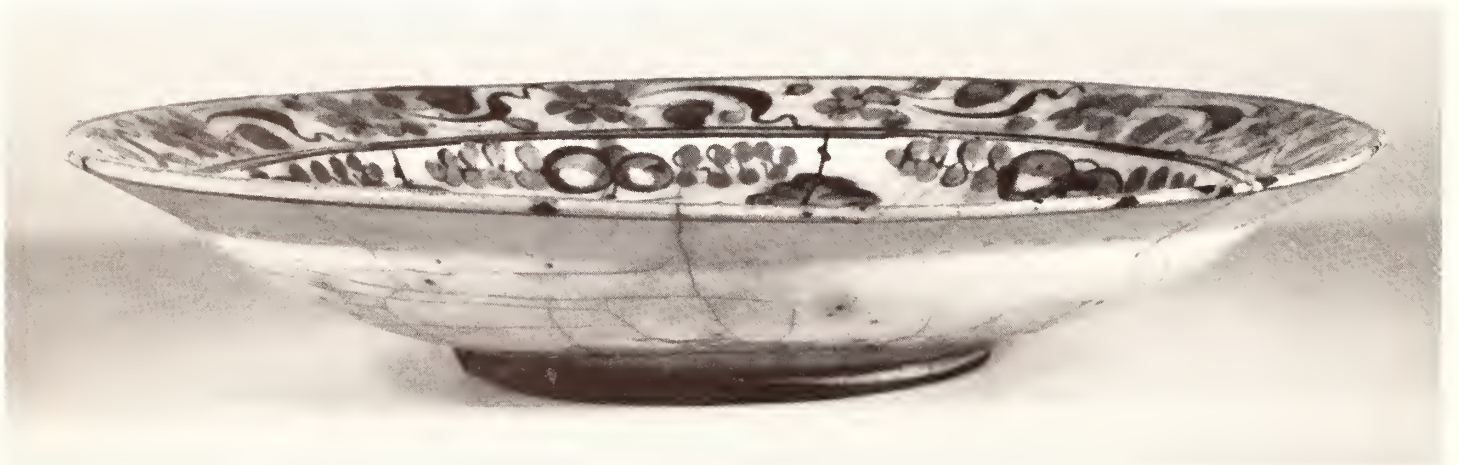
This almost square tile, obviously a portion of a larger panel as indicated by the motifs cut off at the edges, represents two emerald-green parrots perched around a fountain. The birds are surrounded by long serrate leaves and twisting stems bearing blossoms. A large carnation flanked by hyacinths rises from the upper portion of the fountain.

The white ground sets off the brilliantly colored motifs and gives a feeling of airiness in spite of the dense composition. The parrots, painted in the symbolic color, green, the implication of water gushing from the marble fountain and the lush foliage suggest a desire to portray a paradisaical atmosphere. One could reconstruct an early seventeenth-century pavillion whose walls were covered with a series of tiles, its windows opened to the vista of beautiful gardens containing softly cascading fountains and filled with exotic birds, based on the imagery represented on this tile.

Three other pieces with the same motif are in the Benaki Museum in Athens, the Art Museum of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in Kiev and the Detroit Institute of Arts in Michigan. These tiles were probably made for a private dwelling since religious structures traditionally employed floral motifs, arabesques and inscriptions.

One of the most significant contributions of Iznik potters was the manufacture of tiles for the religious and secular buildings within the Ottoman world and for export to other countries. Decorated with a profusion of flowering plants, long feathery leaves and blossoming trees, these tiles covered the interior walls and created a shimmering and opulent quality within the chambers. Although a single tile may appear overcrowded with its great mixture of diverse elements, when employed in large quantities the tiles manage to create a light and serene atmosphere as observed in the mosques and madrasahs of Istanbul and in the pavilions of the Topkapi Palace.







89

*Plate with everted rim and low foot*

03.229

Paste: buff

Glaze: transparent

Decoration: underglaze painted in blue, green, red, yellow and black on white engobe

Height: 5.9 cm. (2 5/16 in.); diameter: 34.0 cm. (13 3/8 in.)

Iran, Safavid period, early 17th century

This polychrome-painted plate has a revolving central rosette with stems, blossoms and leaves decorating the surrounding area. The rim shows a loosely drawn floral scroll with identical buds, blossoms and twisting leaves. The exterior is plain.

The underglaze colors are quite subdued and murky, and are applied in a carefree manner often running over the black outlines. The glaze has a slight greenish tinge and is crackled and pitted.

This example belongs to a group of polychrome pottery generally attributed to the town of Kubachi situated in northwestern Iran. The designs on this group are often outlined in black and painted with dark-blue, dull-green, brownish-red, pale-yellow, purple and turquoise pigments. A majority of the pieces represents male and female figures or animals amidst floral motifs. There also exists a number of tiles executed in the same manner.

The red and yellow pigments in this plate are thickly applied, recalling the red used by Turkish potters. Although there is a remote resemblance to polychrome Iznik wares, both the technique and drawing are inferior to sixteenth-century Ottoman pottery, and reveal a completely different style and aesthetic approach.

Long, black twisting leaves, branches with rounded leaves and five-petaled blossoms seem to be part of the common vocabulary of this type of ware (compare with examples in Pope, *Survey*, pls. 790-794; Lane, *Later Islamic Pottery*, pls. 54 and 55).





**90** *Jar with broad shoulders, low neck and flat base* 03.192  
Paste: off-white  
Glaze: grayish-green  
Decoration: fluted sides  
Height: 20.9 cm. (8 1/4 in.); diameter: 25.6 cm. (10 1/8 in.)  
Iran, Safavid period, 16th-17th century

The heavily potted jar is a close imitation of Chinese celadon wares, both in shape and color of glaze. Its only decoration consists of widely spaced vertical grooving on the walls. A grayish-green glaze covers the exterior and the interior as well as the base of the jar.

Near Eastern imitations of celadons were made in Iran and Egypt as early as the fourteenth century, and a revival appeared in Iran during the Safavid period. This renewal of interest can be attributed to the collection of Chinese porcelains begun by Shah Abbas. A prototype for the Freer piece can be seen in a fourteenth-century celadon jar from the Ardabil Shrine (J. A. Pope, *Chinese Porcelains*, pl. 130). The Iranian jar is identical to the Chinese example, using a *kuan* shape with fluted sides.





- 91\* *Large plate with flattened rim and low foot* 73.3  
Paste: off-white  
Glaze: grayish-green  
Decoration: fluted cavetto  
Height: 8.3 cm. (3 1/4 in.); diameter: 40.2 cm. (15 7/8 in.)  
Iran, Safavid period, 16th-17th century

This plate represents another example of Safavid pottery which is based on Chinese celadons. It has a flattened rim with a raised edge and vertical grooving decorates the cavetto.

The Ardabil collection possesses a number of Chinese celadon plates dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Most of these have the same rim and fluted cavetto observed on this piece; some of the Chinese wares reveal stamped and incised decorations in the center (J. A. Pope, *Chinese Porcelains*, pl. 124).

Islamic imitations of Far Eastern celadons are extremely thick and heavy, although the color of their glaze is quite close to that found on the Chinese prototypes. In the Safavid period, blue-and-white and polychrome designs were also applied to large celadon plates which had a fluted cavetto. One remarkable piece shows a blue-and-white star in the center with the surrounding celadon field slip-painted in white, while others are either painted with white slip or enhanced with polychrome overglaze colors (Pope, *Survey*, pls. 802-804; Lane, *Later Islamic Pottery*, pl. 87B). A majority of these wares is attributed to Kirman.





**92***Bottle with tall neck and low foot* 06.14

Paste: buff

Glaze: turquoise-blue

Decoration: molded ring on neck

Height: 32.1 cm. (12 5/8 in.); diameter: 18.0 cm. (7 1/8 in.)

Iran, Safavid period, 17th century

Monochrome Safavid ceramics were not only limited to celadons, but also included turquoise, blue, green and brown glazed wares. This bottle with a globular body, tall and tapering neck and widening mouth is adorned with a simple molded ring encircling the upper portion of the neck. The turquoise-blue glaze is crackled and is also applied to the inner surface of the mouth.

The shape of the bottle, or bottle-shaped vase, goes back to earlier metal prototypes and can be found in the eleventh or twelfth century (an identical shape occurs in a silver vessel from the Seljuk period in the Freer Gallery, no. 50.5). Similar bottles are frequently employed in miniature paintings depicting princely entertainment scenes from the fourteenth century onward. They are represented either as silver and gold vessels or as blue-and-white ceramics. The most popular period for these bottles, both in paintings and in ceramics, was the seventeenth century (Pope, *Survey*, pls. 795-797 and 806B-809).

Some of the ceramic examples are monochrome glazed; others are painted in luster, blue or polychrome colors while several show relief or pierced decorations. The body shapes vary slightly but the long tapered neck is always distinctly present (see No. 93 for its representations on a plate).





93

*Plate with everted rim and low foot*

70.23

Paste: off-white

Glaze: transparent

Decoration: underglaze painted in blue; cavetto incised

Height: 8.2 cm. (3 1/4 in.); diameter: 45.3 cm. (17 3/4 in.)

Iran, Safavid period, late 17th-early 18th century

The central medallion of this blue-and-white plate represents a female figure placed in a landscape. She holds an empty wine bottle by the neck in one hand and with the other she beckons, tilting her head. Clusters of leaves and blossoms appear on either side of the figure while a plump bird perches on one of the branches on the right. Several floral elements hang overhead, suggesting that the figure is surrounded by foliage. The medallion is enclosed by a scalloped border.

The cavetto has an incised frieze consisting of a series of spade-shaped leaves filled with blossoms. A thin blue band accentuates the rim.

The exterior reveals eight lotus panels, decorated with floral sprays and separated by vertical units containing so-called "tassel-marks."

The exaggeration of the hand of the figure, particularly the extended index finger, is a feature seen in late Safavid paintings. The theme of a figure in a landscape is also found on contemporary blue-and-white Iranian wares. Stylized lotus panels alternating with "tassel-marks" are also among the common decorative elements of this group of wares but are often seen on the inner surfaces of the plates (Lane, *Later Islamic Pottery*, pls. 71A, 73A and 78B). This convention is based on late Ming examples and several comparable pieces can be found in the Ardabil collection (J. A. Pope, *Chinese Porcelains*, pls. 102-104).

The Freer plate with its motifs outlined in dark-blue and filled in with varying intensities of the same color belongs to a particular type attributed to Kirman or Meshhed. These wares are underglaze painted in blue and imitate the late Ming style. They are predominantly decorated with stylized landscape motifs executed in a sketchy manner and often include an incised and molded cavetto around the central medallion. The six spurmarks on the base of this plate suggest that it was fired on a support, a practice begun in the eighteenth century according to Arthur Lane (*Later Islamic Pottery*, p. 97). With its white body, slightly opacified glaze and underglaze painting, this example is fairly successful in its attempt to imitate Far Eastern porcelains.





**94** *Plate with everted rim and low foot* 04.151

Paste: off-white

Glaze: transparent

Decoration: underglaze painted in blue

Height: 6.7 cm. (2 5/8 in.); diameter: 34.0 cm. (13 3/8 in.)

Iran, Safavid period, 17th-18th century

This blue-and-white plate is decorated with motifs inspired by Far Eastern porcelains, more specifically by a group of Chinese export wares executed during the reign of Emperor Wan-li (1573-1619). The central medallion of the Iranian example shows a landscape with coarsely executed trees and flowers. Some of the elements recall the lotus blossom, rock, concentric wave, and water-chestnut motifs used on late Chinese blue-and-white porcelains.

The outer band of the plate is divided into four units by cloud-collars. In each of the units there is a standing figure represented with a shaven head and Oriental facial features; these figures wear long robes and probably portray Buddhist monks. Pine trees spring from the concentric rocks placed at the rim and hang downward between the figures. Blossoms composed of a series of dots are sprinkled in the voids.

The exterior shows eight lotus panels separated by vertical strokes.

The glaze on this example is somewhat opacified to give a desired whiteness to the plate and has become crazed during the firing.

This type of blue-and-white ware, based on Chinese export examples, was popularly made in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The most favored designs were landscapes with animals and architectural elements drawn in a rather careless manner with the intense blue pigment showing a tendency to run. The figures are almost always "Chinese" types in conjunction with other Chinese-inspired elements such as dragons, ch'i-lins, gazelles, birds, mountains, rivers, pagodas, cloud-collars and certain specific flora identified with Far Eastern iconography. This group is often attributed to Kirman.





- 95** *Vase with bulbous body, flaring neck and low foot* 03.4  
Paste: off-white  
Glaze: transparent  
Decoration: incised  
Height: 10.8 cm. (4 1/4 in.); diameter: 11.6 cm. (4 9/16 in.)  
Iran, Safavid period, late 17th-18th century

The renewal of interest in the imitation of white Chinese porcelains which occurred during the Safavid period is represented by this small vase. The fine-grained white paste of the piece is almost vitrified and its thin walls are fairly translucent. The vertical strokes and curving lines on the shoulder and the scroll on the upper portion of the body are delicately incised and barely visible under the brilliant glaze.

This type of paste and technique was previously attempted during the Seljuk period in the twelfth century, inspired by Sung porcelains (Nos. 13-15). The seventeenth and eighteenth-century Safavid wares imitate a style which represents an archaistic feature in Chinese art. Popularly labeled *an-hua*, meaning hidden or secret decorations, the Chinese examples, like the Islamic ones, have almost invisible motifs adorning the white wares.

Some of the fifteenth and sixteenth-century examples of Chinese porcelains in the Ardabil Shrine reveal incised decorations. This fact indicates that sufficient models were available to the Iranian potters (J. A. Pope, *Chinese Porcelains*, pls. 113 and 114). Although the technique of the Iranian examples is based on Far Eastern models, their shapes follow an indigenous tradition.





96 *Bottle with tall neck and flat base* 03.196

Paste: off-white

Glaze: transparent

Decoration: incised

Height: 25.3 cm. (10 in.); diameter: 14.4 cm. (5 11/16 in.)

Iran, Safavid period, late 17th-18th century

Another example of the fine white, almost vitrified wares is shaped as a bottle with a globular body. Its tall neck is adorned with a molded ring. The incised decoration shows a spiral band below the neck followed by a panel of vertical strokes on the shoulder while large foliate units filled with spirals adorn the body.

The shape resembles the monochrome-glazed bottle described in Number 92; yet the technique, based on Chinese models, is one that appears at a slightly later date, toward the end of the Safavid period.

The provenance of these white wares, termed “porcelaneous,” is still undecided, although at times attributed to Nayin near Isfahan.

This example had a mishap during firing: its neck is slightly crooked and leans to one side.





- 97 *Bowl with flaring sides, straight rim and low foot* 03.6  
Paste: off-white  
Glaze: transparent  
Decoration: pierced; underglaze painted in black  
Height: 5.8 cm. (2 1/4 in.); diameter: 18.2 cm. (7 1/8 in.)  
Iran, Safavid period, 18th century

Belonging to the same group as the previous two pieces, this bowl shows a variation in technique and decoration. The upper portion of the walls has a pierced band in which two rows of small openings surround a frieze of chevron slashes. The transparent glaze fills the holes, further enhancing the translucency of the piece.

The raised knob in the center is decorated with an underglaze-painted black rosette while four additional floral sprays are placed in the surrounding zone. A series of three black dots adorns the rim.

Piercing of white wares was popular in the twelfth century (Nos. 14 and 15) and appears to have been revived during the late Safavid period. Piercing was also employed in contemporary white porcelains produced in China, popularly termed “rice-grain pattern” since the holes were presumably barely large enough for a grain of rice to pass through. It is difficult in this period to determine which tradition influenced the other, but the precursor seems to be Iran, based on earlier known examples.

White wares, pierced and underglaze painted, are often termed “Gombroon” due to the fact that a great quantity was shipped for export at the port of Gombroon, now Bender Abbas, on the Persian Gulf.

The raised knob in the center of the Freer bowl is functional as well as decorative. When held in one hand with the middle finger resting in the recess of the knob and the thumb placed on the rim, the piece is comfortably balanced and easy to manipulate. This central knob also exists on other similar pieces (Pope, *Survey*, pls. 811A and B).







98

*Bowl with flaring sides, straight rim and low foot* 11.320

Paste: off-white

Glaze: opaque white

Decoration: overglaze painted in golden luster

Height: 8.8 cm. (3 1/2 in.); diameter: 19.3 cm. (7 5/8 in.)

Iran, Safavid period, second half of the 17th century

A floral composition, consisting of highly stylized iris, rounded blossoms, rosette-shaped flowers, curving long branches and fern-like leaves, fills the entire inner surface of the bowl. The motifs spring from a cluster of leaves placed at the lower portion. A braid enclosed by thin lines adorns the rim.

The exterior represents a landscape in which a pair of cypresses, flanked by willow branches, alternates with heavily foliated large trees. A thick ground line encircles the foot.

The gold luster on the bowl is slightly greenish-brown in tone and produces reddish-violet reflections. The paste is extremely hard, white and fine, similar to that seen on the pure white Safavid wares (Nos. 95-97).

A particular group of lustres was produced in Iran during the latter half of the seventeenth and possibly continued into the eighteenth century. They reveal a homogeneous style, showing a preference for floral motifs, especially iris flowers, cypress and willow trees as exemplified by this piece. Small bowls and long-necked bottles seem to have been the most common shapes. The provenance of this group is still debated, with examples found in various sites such as in Kashan, Isfahan and Tabriz.





- 99** *Bowl with flaring sides, straight rim and low foot* 03.7  
Paste: off-white  
Glaze: opaque white  
Decoration: overglaze painted in golden luster  
Height: 9.3 cm. (3 11/16 in.); diameter: 18.4 cm. (7 1/4 in.)  
Iran, Safavid period, second half of the 17th century

Another example of the late Safavid lusterwares represents a tree growing from the bottom of the bowl. Large trefoil leaves with lobed edges, thin undulating tendrils, long branches with elongated symmetrical leaves and rounded fruit (resembling pomegranates) sprout from the twisted trunk of the tree. A braided band appears at the rim, similar to the one observed on the previous bowl.

The exterior is divided into diagonal units; floral motifs composed of leaves and two superimposed rounded blossoms alternate with solidly painted luster panels. Identical in technique, shape and paste to Number 98, the luster on this piece is slightly more greenish in tone but it also has reddish-violet reflections.

The motifs on these late lusterwares are neither related to the Chinese themes found on contemporary Safavid pieces, nor are they derived from the traditional Islamic vocabulary. They reflect the taste of the Safavid period executed in a revival of the luster-painting technique.





# 100

*Bowl with flaring sides, straight rim and low foot* 08.115

Paste: off-white

Glaze: opaque blue

Decoration: overglaze painted in reddish luster

Height: 8.7 cm. (3 7/16 in.); diameter: 18.9 cm. (7 7/16 in.)

Iran, Safavid period, second half of the 17th century

On some of the late Safavid wares, the luster is applied on a deep-blue ground, producing an extremely rich effect. This bowl, like the previous two, is decorated with floral motifs. In the center is a tall cypress tree surrounded by another type, the branches of which bear large leaves and fruit or blossoms. Rocks and clusters of grass appear on the ground beneath the trees. Cartouches filled with arabesques divide the interior walls into four units, each of which has a tree similar to the one flanking the cypress in the center. The rim decoration, following the design seen in Numbers 98 and 99, has a braided band enclosed by a series of thin lines.

The exterior repeats the motifs of the interior walls: six solidly painted cartouches alternate with floral motifs composed of seven-petaled flowers intermingled with leaves springing from clusters of grass. At the base there are three spur-marks.

The luster on this piece is brownish-red with reddish-violet reflections. The paste, like the previous examples, is almost vitrified and very fine.

The combination of luster and blue also appears on other pieces from this period, several of which have been found in Yazd and Kirman.





**101** *Large bowl with flaring sides, straight rim and low foot* 08.132  
Paste: cream  
Glaze: transparent  
Decoration: underglaze painted in blue and black  
Height: 13.2 cm. (5 3/16 in.); diameter: 32.7 cm. (12 7/8 in.)  
Iran, Kajar period, 19th century

The center of the bowl represents a figure riding a galloping horse and holding a bird, possibly a hawk, in one hand. The rider is surrounded by garlands and floral sprays. Two bands, one composed of chevrons and the other showing an arabesque scroll, encircle the rim.

The exterior has a landscape depicting highly stylized pagodas and trees amidst mountains and streams.

The decoration is drawn in black with blue used to fill in some of the motifs. The execution is quite sketchy and both the figure and his horse are rendered in a naive manner. The pointed hat, pinched-in waist and large dark eyes of the personage reflect the painting style of the Kajar period.

The revival of ancient and traditional themes, a characteristic feature of Kajar art, can be observed in this example which reemploys the princely theme of the rider, one of the most popular motifs in early Iranian art. The decoration of the exterior is also derivative, based on sixteenth and seventeenth-century Iranian imitations of late Ming dynasty blue-and-white wares.

This bowl combines two separate traditions: an indigenous Iranian one on the interior and an imitation of Far Eastern porcelains on the exterior. The eclectic and archaistic features of the piece are typical of the Kajar period.





## APPENDIX I: NOTES ON THE INSCRIPTIONS

Although examples of signed and dated Islamic pottery have been studied, the contents of the inscriptions which appear on the pieces have not yet been thoroughly analysed. The following chart presents the types of phrases found on the objects in the exhibition. It is hoped that in the future more research will be devoted to the classification of inscriptions which without doubt would be beneficial in furthering our understanding of Islamic pottery.

Of the 101 pieces on display 44 bear inscriptions: 33 of these are written in Arabic and 7 use Persian, while the remaining 3 combine both languages; the contents of one inscription could not be identified due to excessive repairs.

The objects which employ ornamental and simulated inscriptions have not been taken into account. None of the Ottoman and Safavid pieces in the exhibition possesses inscriptions of any sort.

The chart reveals certain discernible patterns:

1. Slip-painted Samanid pottery often contains the word "blessing" and combines it with popular sayings or proverbs. The inscriptions are always written in *kufic* and in Arabic.
2. Seljuk wares dating from the late twelfth-early thirteenth century employ lengthy phrases of good wishes in Arabic, or repeat the two epithets of God, "the Truth" and "the Knowing." These two types of phrases are particularly noticeable on the overglaze-painted wares which make up seventy percent of the pieces with Arabic inscriptions. The writing is both in *kufic* and cursive script.
3. Seljuk pottery attributed to Kashan shows Persian inscriptions. The rapidly executed cursive script is extremely difficult to read and renders poetic verses which often cannot be identified with classical Persian poetry. These verses possibly contain certain Sufi implications (see Bahrani, pp. 114-121 and 127). On two pieces the lengthy phrase of good wishes is written in Arabic while the other inscriptions are in Persian (Nos. 28 and 50). Another object repeats the two epithets of God in Arabic but its Persian inscription could not be deciphered (No. 54). Pieces which employ Persian are generally either lusterwares or underglaze-painted objects.
4. Ayyubid wares, attributed to Rakka and contemporaneous with the Seljuk pieces, generally repeat the Arabic word "happiness," which is written either in *naskhi* or in *kufic* script. These wares are underglaze-painted in blue with overglaze brownish-red luster decorations.

# CHART

<i>Cat. No.</i>	<i>Shape</i>	<i>Technique</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Provenance</i>	<i>Language</i>	<i>Inscription</i>	<i>Acc. No.</i>
3	bowl	luster-painted	Abbasid	(Samarra)	Arabic	"blessing" and "trust (in God) and"	25.6
7	plate	slip-painted	Samanid	Northeast Iran	Arabic	aphorism and "blessing"	54.16
8	plate	slip-painted	Samanid	Northeast Iran	Arabic	aphorism and "blessing"	52.11
9	bowl	slip-painted	Samanid	Northeast Iran	Arabic	"blessing"	56.1
11	plate	slip-painted	Samanid	Northeast Iran	Arabic	aphorism	65.27
12	bowl	slip-painted	Samanid	Northeast Iran	Arabic	aphorism and "blessing"	57.24
13	jug	carved or molded	Seljuk	?	Arabic	good wishes	37.9
22	bowl	molded	Seljuk	?	Arabic	good wishes and name of maker	55.9
23	ewer	underglaze-painted and pierced	Seljuk	(Kashan)	Persian	not read	49.19
24	bowl	carved and pierced	Seljuk	?	Arabic	good wishes	14.52
27	jug	luster-painted	Seljuk	(Kashan)	Persian	not read	69.27
28	plate	luster-painted	Seljuk	(Kashan)	Arabic and Persian	Arabic: good wishes, date and name of maker; Persian: not read	41.11
29	bowl	luster-painted	Seljuk or later	?	Arabic	"the Truth"; remaining illegible	40.22
35	bowl	overglaze-painted	Seljuk	?	Arabic	good wishes and name of maker	37.5
36	bowl	overglaze-painted	Seljuk	?	Arabic	"the Truth," "the Knowing," "happiness" and "health"; exterior illegible	12.6
37	bowl	overglaze-painted	Seljuk	?	Arabic	"the Truth" (?)	45.8
38	bowl	overglaze-painted	Seljuk	?	Arabic	"the Truth" and good wishes	09.130
39	bowl	overglaze-painted	Seljuk	?	Arabic	good wishes and name of owner	27.3
40	bowl	overglaze-painted	Seljuk	?	Arabic	"the Knowing," "the Truth" and good wishes	12.68
43	bowl	overglaze-painted	Seljuk	?	Arabic	good wishes	09.112
45	inkwell	overglaze-painted	Seljuk	?	Arabic	good wishes	34.18
46	jug	underglaze and luster-painted	Seljuk	(Kashan)	?	illegible	29.9
48	ewer	overglaze-painted	Seljuk	?	Arabic	good wishes	32.23



50	bowl	overglaze-painted	Sejuk	?	Arabic and Persian	Arabic: good wishes, names of figures; Persian: an incomplete inscription	43:3
51	bowl	overglaze-painted	Sejuk	?	Arabic	good wishes	38.13
52	bowl	underglaze-painted	Sejuk	(Kashan)	Persian	not read	67:25
53	bowl	underglaze-painted	Sejuk	(Kashan)	Persian	not read	67:24
54	bowl	underglaze-painted	Sejuk	(Kashan)	Arabic and Persian	Arabic: "the Knowing" and "the Truth"; Persian; not read	10.9
55	bowl	underglaze-painted	Sejuk	(Kashan)	Persian	not read	67:2
56	bowl	underglaze-painted	Sejuk	(Kashan)	Persian	not read	65:28
57	plate	luster-painted	Fatimid	(Fustat)	Arabic	good wishes and provenance	41.12
60	bowl	luster-painted	Fatimid	(Fustat)	Arabic	"pleasure," "wealth" and "happiness"	36.2
63	bowl	underglaze and luster-painted	Ayyubid	(Rakka)	Arabic	"worthy of (it)"	42:5
64	jar	underglaze and luster-painted	Ayyubid	(Rakka)	Arabic	"happiness"	08.138
65	basin	underglaze and luster-painted	Ayyubid	(Rakka)	Arabic	"happiness"	08.148
66	jug	underglaze and luster-painted	Ayyubid	(Rakka)	Arabic	"happiness"	08.140
67	vase	underglaze and luster-painted	Ayyubid	(Rakka)	Arabic	"happiness to him"	08.141
68	tile	underglaze and luster-painted	Ilkhanid	(Kashan)	Arabic	Koranic verse (11.116)	09.319
69	bowl	luster-painted	Ilkhanid	(Kashan)	Persian	poetry	09.111
71	plate	underglaze-painted	Ilkhanid	(Sultanabad)	Arabic	good wishes	09.74
73	bowl	underglaze and luster-painted	Ilkhanid	(Sultanabad)	Arabic	"happiness" and "I have trust in God"	08.161
74	bowl	underglaze and luster-painted	Ilkhanid	(Sultanabad)	Arabic	illegible except for date	09.317
77	jar	molded	Ilkhanid	?	Arabic	good wishes and date	08.198
78	vase	overglaze painted in luster and blue	Nasrid	(Malaga)	Arabic	poetry; "health" and name of owner (?)	03.206

5. Ilkhanid wares use cursive inscriptions which either bestow good wishes in Arabic or contain Persian verses. The two dated examples render their dates in numerals (Nos. 74 and 77).

Nine of the pieces in the exhibition bear significant inscriptions which give the names of personages, dates or provenance:

1. Names of artists: Hasan al-Kashani (No. 22).  
Sayyid Shams al-Din al-Hasani (No. 28)  
Ali ibn Yusuf (No. 35)
2. Names of owners: Amir Abu Nasr Kirmanshah (No. 39)  
ibn al-Kutandi (No. 78)
3. A unique overglaze-painted bowl contains a group of eight names which identify the figures in the central scene while two additional names are given in the fragmentary inscription on the rim (No. 50). These names are:  
Amir Sabik al-Din  
Baha al-Din Muhammad Shir Barik (or Berig)  
Shams al-Din Ilyas  
Beg Arslan Ushi  
Khudavend Muzaffar al-Daula wa-'l-Din  
Shams (al-Din or ibn) Mengelbeh  
ibn Muhammad  
Pesar-i Lank  
Baha al-Din  
Pesar-i Lank
4. Dates: Jumada II, 607—December 1210 (No. 28).  
676—1277 (No. 74)  
683—1284-85 (No. 77)
5. Provenance: “in Misr” (No. 57)

It should be noted that only one piece bears both the name of the maker and the date (No. 28). None of the names of the artists, owners, or personages mentioned in the inscriptions has been identified.



## APPENDIX II: NOTES ON THE COLORS OF PASTE

The determination of the exact color of the earthenware fabric of any ceramic object is rather arbitrary since its tone will be modified by firing conditions. However, the pastes of Islamic wares fall into four general types, each with slight variations in tone. The terms used in the catalogue—off-white, cream, buff, reddish or reddish-buff—are relative and need further explanations.

*Off-white*: is used to define a wide range of tones which covers grayish-white, creamy-white, slightly pinkish-white as well as a "dirty-white." Three-fourths of Islamic pottery, including the most outstanding examples, are made of a fine grained and well levigated paste. This paste is at times fairly soft and in other cases almost as hard as true porcelain.

1. It first appears on a group of twelfth-century white wares executed during the Seljuk period. The paste of these wares is extremely hard and fine, and has almost a translucent appearance (Nos. 13-15).
2. Seljuk wares of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries which are carved, molded, stamped and pierced with monochrome or polychrome glazes (Nos. 16, 17, 20-22 and 24).
3. Late twelfth and early thirteenth-century underglaze-painted Seljuk wares (Nos. 23, 26 and 52-56).
4. Late twelfth and early thirteenth-century luster-painted Seljuk wares (Nos. 27-35).
5. Late twelfth and early thirteenth-century overglaze-painted Seljuk wares (Nos. 36-51).
6. Late twelfth and early thirteenth-century Ayyubid wares attributed to Rakka. These pieces are underglaze-painted with overglaze brownish-red luster decorations (Nos. 63-67).
7. Late thirteenth and early fourteenth-century Ilkhanid wares, both luster and underglaze-painted (Nos. 68-76).
8. Ottoman pottery and tiles from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The paste of these wares is quite hard and fine (Nos. 79-88).
9. Safavid pieces from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially the celadons and blue-and-white wares (Nos. 90, 91, 93 and 94).
10. Late Safavid pieces of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which are incised or pierced white wares, or luster-painted. The paste of this group is similar to that of twelfth-century Seljuk white wares: whitish, hard and almost translucent (Nos. 95-100).

*Cream*: is a warm, light beige tone, rather sand colored. It is soft but fairly well levigated and fine grained. This paste characterizes the Abbasid wares.

1. Abbasid lusters and overglaze-painted white wares (Nos. 1-4).
2. A singular nineteenth-century Kajar bowl (No. 101).

*Buff*: is more brownish than cream, often a medium grayish-brown in tone. Its texture is close to the cream paste. Aside from being extensively used during the Samanid and Fatimid periods, this paste occurs in singular pieces which are often utilitarian.

1. Samanid epigraphic pottery from the tenth century (Nos. 7-12).
2. Fatimid luster-painted ceramics from the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Nos. 57-60).
3. Singular examples:
  - a. Molded jar from the Seljuk period, thirteenth century (No. 25).
  - b. Molded lamp from the Ayyubid period, twelfth-thirteenth century (No. 62).
  - c. Molded jar from the Ilkhanid period, late thirteenth century (No. 77).
  - d. Overglaze-painted vase from Spain, the late fourteenth-early fifteenth century (No. 78).
  - e. Polychrome underglaze-painted Safavid plate from the seventeenth century and a contemporary monochrome-glazed vase (Nos. 89 and 92).

*Reddish or reddish-buff*: is rather coarse grained and at times brownish-red in tone. It is generally employed in the incised and carved wares and tends to be provincial in quality.

1. Samanid period polychrome underglaze-painted wares and luster imitations (Nos. 5 and 6).
2. Seljuk sgraffiato wares from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, attributed to northwest Iran (Nos. 18 and 19).
3. Contemporary Ayyubid sgraffiato ware attributed to Rakka (No. 61).



## ACCESSION NUMBERS IN NUMERICAL ORDER

<i>Acc. No.</i>	<i>Cat. No.</i>	<i>Acc. No.</i>	<i>Cat. No.</i>	<i>Acc. No.</i>	<i>Cat. No.</i>
03.4	95	12.68	40	54.3	79
03.6	97	12.69	31	54.16	7
03.7	99	14.52	24	55.8	81
03.192	90	25.4	42	55.9	22
03.196	96	25.6	3	56.1	9
03.197	34	27.3	39	56.2	14
03.206	78	28.1	25	57.21	30
03.229	89	28.2	44	57.23	2
04.151	94	29.9	46	57.24	12
06.14	92	29.10	47	59.16	6
06.40	21	29.11	17	61.21	16
08.115	100	31.7	61	63.7	82
08.132	101	32.23	48	65.27	11
08.138	64	34.18	45	65.28	56
08.140	66	36.2	60	66.11	1
08.141	67	37.5	35	66.12	88
08.148	65	37.9	13	66.25	85
08.161	73	37.10	15	66.26	59
08.198	77	38.12	41	66.27	5
09.74	71	38.13	51	67.2	55
09.111	69	40.22	29	67.3	20
09.112	43	41.11	28	67.4	19
09.118	33	41.12	57	67.24	53
09.130	38	42.5	63	67.25	52
09.132	72	42.13	62	67.26	26
09.316	75	43.3	50	68.68	86
09.317	74	44.49	18	69.2	87
09.318	76	45.8	37	69.25	84
09.319	68	46.30	58	69.27	27
09.370	32	47.9	70	70.2	80
10.9	54	49.19	23	70.23	93
11.319	49	52.11	8	70.25	83
11.320	98	53.70	10	73.3	91
12.6	36	53.90	4		



















SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION LIBRARIES



3 9088 01667 2487